

# This Old House

27

inspiring ideas  
for your  
laundry room  
p. 66

## easy paint makeovers

- Fresh kitchen color combos
- Simple decorative effects
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LOOK



[ January/February 2011 ]

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Dream Home  
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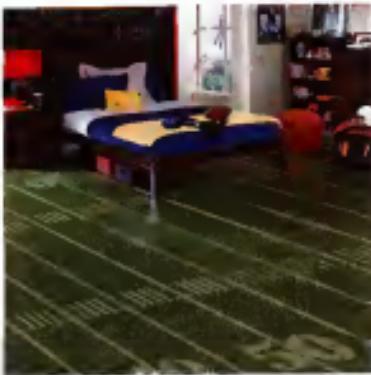
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# readermail

We just loved the creative, compassionate, and collegial responses we got to the November issue. One imaginative homeowner shared her painted star runner, inspired by the colors in our cover design (see below). Another reader took the time to add her praises to our very first Hometown Heroes contest winner. And a longtime reader explains the order in which he prefers to paint a room.

## Hometown Heroes winner

Public health nurses are an army of community heroes. They are masters of compassionate action, developing practical and effective solutions for needs they encounter. Sue Smit, featured as the November 2010 TOM Hometown Heroes award winner for her Japan Disaster charity, is a perfect example. Her selfless largesse toward children, common necessities that are easy and affordable for charities and businesses to contribute, and I can just imagine the looks on the children's faces (and the faces of their grateful parents) when

they receive such a gift as they cope with life in a car, never mind the loss of a loved one. Kudos to TOM and Hyatt for sponsoring the Hometown Heroes award, and to Mrs. Smit for her inspiring commitment.

—JUDY SINGER, ATLANTA

## Paint by numbers

I've been reading and enjoying TOM magazine for years and have used many of the articles and suggestions, for which I say thank you. I used to paint a lot about interior painting that I started a few years ago. While the system in November's "Read This

Before You Pick Up a Paintbrush" [11] ordering [1], walls [1], doors, [4] trim] is good, I have found that the following order works better and is generally faster [1] ordering [1] trim, [3] walls, then [4] doors. The main reason is that it is much easier to cut in the walls to the trim than the trim to the wall. You're not looking up a 90-degree angle. It is also easier to clean up around all the walls than the trim, if the overspray on the walls is not too bad, the wall primer and paint will cover it. Additionally, I paint doors like so that you don't have to worry about buying them every time you go in and out during the job.

—EDWARD SHAFER, BALTIMORE

**The editors' reply:** This order would work as long as you protect the trim from overspray when rolling the walls.

## Correction

On page 96 of the November issue the equation for figuring the number of 2-by-2-foot bevel panels needed for a room should have read: ceiling width (width/length) - 4 x 1.02 = number.



**reader project of the month**

**Great adaptation**

BY MARIA CALLIGARIS

While looking for a clever solution to painting my basement stairs, I turned at the November TOM cover [page 11]—and there it was. I love the results and so does my family. Thanks for once again giving me inspiration.

## how to reach us

The editors, This Old House magazine  
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# letter {from This Old House}

## Some bright ideas just get better

It was four years ago, right after *This Old House* launched its new website, that we had an idea. (See that lightly?) That's me having an idea.)

We had built forums into the site where readers could go talk to one another, ask questions, share inspiration, show off their accomplishments. And, sure, did you guys take advantage? In fact, there was no such lively communication and so much wisdom offered an advice thread here from that, in, er, editor, thought, Gabe, we need to share this community—and not just with the people online but also with the *millions* of folks who read the print version of *This Old House*, too. So in the spring of 2005 we [and when I say we, I really mean you] did something no one had done before: produced the first 100 percent reader-created issue of a magazine.

It was great, and subsequent editions only got better. For the 2009 version, *Today*, the publishing trade organization, awarded us an Editor's Choice for magazine.

Now we're set to do our fourth reader-created issue, and we're committed to making it the best one yet. And, like the previous three, we can't do it without your help, so... help!

Have you done a remodel like John and Leslie Coyne did last year? If so, we want you to submit it to us at [thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH](http://thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH) because we're giving away \$10,000 for the best ones sent in. Or maybe you've got a neighbor like Richard Hill, who uses his golf bag to carry his garden-pump sprayer. We love tips like that, which you can send to the same address. Oh, and we want someone to work with TOH general contractor Tim Silva on a Home Center Project like Amy Palubak did when they built a garage workshop. If you've got an idea for a project, e-mail me at [scott@thisoldhouse.com](mailto:scott@thisoldhouse.com). That year we're even going to ask you to help pick the magazine's cover. Stay tuned for details on that.

We'll be updating you on the whole project in the next issue, but the best way to not miss an opportunity is to subscribe to our free e-mail newsletters, where we'll encounter lots of other goodies. If you don't already get them, go to [thisoldhouse.com/newsletters](http://thisoldhouse.com/newsletters) to sign up.

And in the meantime, enjoy this month's TOH. I think it's a pretty good issue—but I'm betting that if we work together, we can do even better.

*Scott Gable*  
SCOTT OMELIANIK, EDITOR  
[scott@thisoldhouse.com](mailto:scott@thisoldhouse.com)

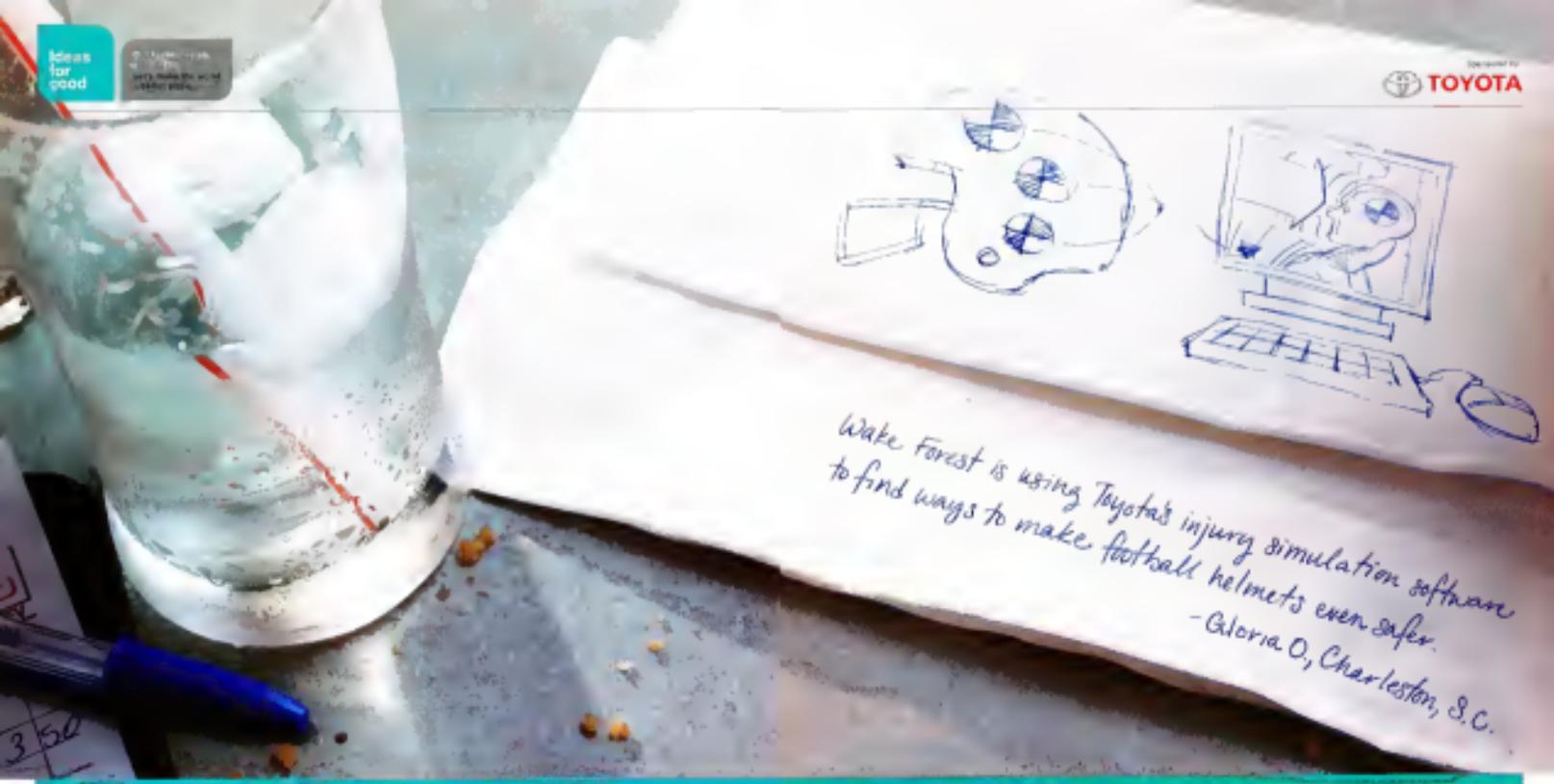


### THREE THINGS I LEARNED FROM THIS ISSUE+

1. **How a couch** can make your wife look like a model plants [p. 28]
2. **How a 12-volt drill-driver battery** can help you rip up your wood deck [p. 18]
3. **How you can turn out** your wood furniture's best side of depression. [p. 12]



Wake Forest is using Toyota's injury simulation software to find ways to make football helmets even safer.  
- Gloria O., Charleston, S.C.



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# checklist

{ January/February 2011 }

## EASY WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR HOME RIGHT NOW

### Order seeds early

January is National Seed Order Gardening Month—and for good reason. Though planting time is still a few months away, some garden favorites, like heirloom tomatoes and purple carrots, are grown in limited supplies and can sell out fast. If you have your heart set on a certain variety, order the seeds now so that they'll be at your doorstep in time for the thaw.



### Update your decor—on the cheap

Here's a tip of inspirational magazine pages you've been waiting to make a reality: January and February are the best times to sell furniture at serious discounts—up to 60 percent off. In some cases, as stores hold clearance sales to make room for new spring inventory.



### Steam out small dents in wood furniture

Just because your favorite table has had a few rough encounters with pencils doesn't mean it's beyond repair. To fix dents in finished wood, perform the fix with a candle, cover with a hot damp rag, and press with a warm iron for a few seconds. Repeat the steam until the wood fills the depressions.

### Reuse fireplace ashes

Cleaning out your hearth is a messy business, but if you burn wood logs, you can make the chore doubly worthwhile by scattering the cooled ashes on your compost pile. Make sure to sprinkle a small scoop on each new 2- to 3-inch layer of compost; the ashes will add potassium, lime, and other nutrients that can also raise your soil's pH, so don't overdo it.



### What's on your checklist?

"It'll be sailing and sailing until the non-joint cavities in your home's collar with rigid foam board and caulk spray foam—it's only going to cost us about \$300."

—Shirley Townes-Jones,  
Lafayette, Ind.

E-mail us your ideas of checklist@thisoldhouse.com

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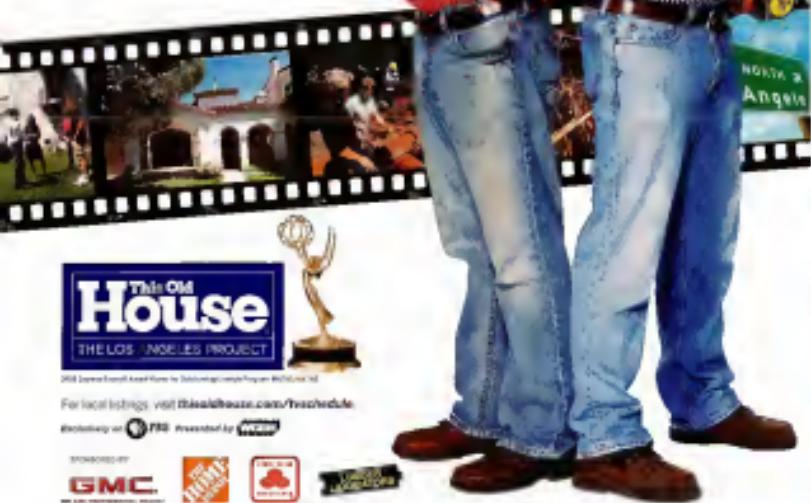
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# WE'RE GOING HOLLYWOOD!

Tune in as *This Old House* takes the show on the road to Los Angeles where we'll work with a talented team of locals to give a Spanish Colonial Revival a star quality makeover.

See the transformation in 10 new episodes debuting this winter on PBS.



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# home solutions

Edited by Jessie Dodell-Feder

INSIDE

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MORE



SMART IDEA

## Tin-tile fireplace surround

While looking for a way to add personality to their new bathroom fireplace, TOH readers Steve and Sandy Miller had this flash of genius: Why not use the same unique tin tiles that adorned their kitchen backsplash for the surround? The Grass Valley, California, couple loved how the ornate, nail-tile pattern highlighted the narrow space. So they cut the tiles to fit from large panels, then covered the surround with cement backer board and affixed the tin with a heat-resistant construction adhesive. In total, the project took only a few days—but the result will look cozy all winter.



When covering a narrow area, choose metal ceiling tiles with a rectangular or flat profile so they won't protrude without ruining the pattern. Tin: \$20 for a 2-ft.-x-4-ft. sheet; [cleverceilings.com](http://cleverceilings.com)





## + UPDATES

## From closet to office

When you're tight on space, a home office may seem like luxury, but carving one out from a seldom-used closet is easier than you think. Just take out the existing rod and shelves, then fit L-shaped shelves at least 1 foot apart and mount with standoffs, which can hold up to 70 pounds per foot. Try: Eliza (lizeshelf.com) and Platinum Officers' C Closet, \$232; [contemporary.com](http://contemporary.com). 2. Avoid clutter by stashing stationery and odds-and-ends in labeled, stackable boxes. 3. Your closet can't take advantage of vertical real estate by stacking shelves across the back sides for posting notes and bills. 4. Set your desk far enough from a small, movable magnetic or dry-erase board. Turn the easel-style board versus, pens and notepads against the board with a blackboard paint. 5. Pick a narrow desk with slim shelves directly beneath the top for space-saving, a key-to-access storage. 6. Instead of installing a ceiling light, opt for a task lamp with an adjustable wire. Learn how to add a desk light fixture at [www.hgtv.com](http://www.hgtv.com). —HEATHER RODGERS

## + HEALTHY HOME

## Clean-air plants

Renovation projects like installing new carpet and painting your walls can release chemicals that pollute indoor air. Luckily, some houseplants moonlight as air filters, too. Just place many plants in the rooms you use most, says environmental scientist Dr. Bill Wolverton. Here, three smart options:



**English Ivy**  
This hearty climbing vine thrives in small spaces. It also fares well in rooms with little sun.  
**HOW IT HELPS:** Its dense foliage is great at absorbing formaldehyde, the most prevalent indoor pollutant, which shows up in wood furniture stains and synthetic carpet dyes.



**Peace Lily**  
Among the few air purifiers that flower, peace lilies adapt well to low light and need weekly watering.  
**HOW IT HELPS:** This year-round bloomer cuts the air of VOC benzene, a carcinogen found in paints, furniture wax, and polishes. It also soaks up nicotine, which is emitted by cigarettes, adhesives, and certain cleaners.



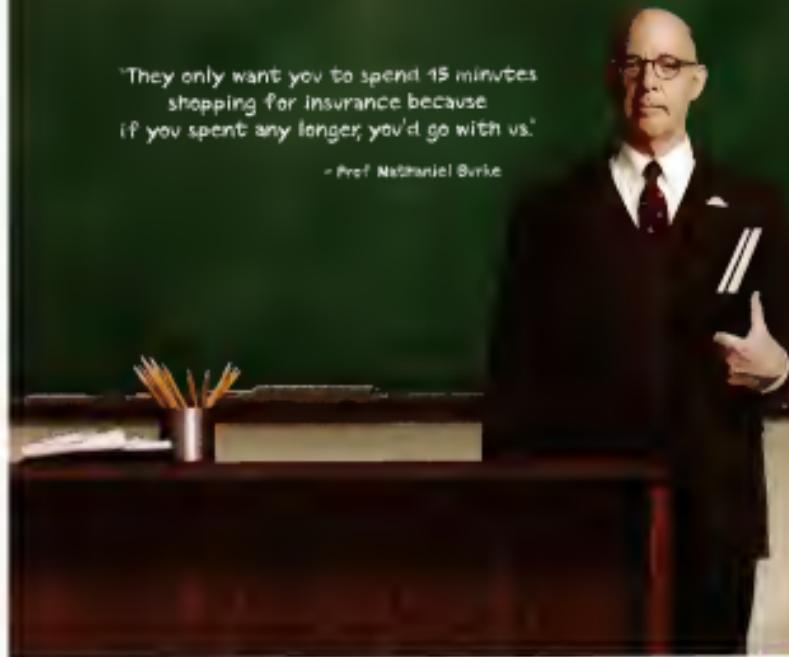
**Lady Palm**  
Fun to grow, tree-like specimen lady palm thrives overripe, fern-like leaves.  
**HOW IT HELPS:** Keep an eye on the respiratory system and a major ingredient in some cleaners: trichloroethylene.

—CHARRELLE BURKE

Photo: iStockphoto.com; plants: 1. English Ivy, 2. Peace Lily, 3. Lady Palm

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—Prof. Nathaniel Burke



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## + YARD CONTROL

**Tree service**

Whether the cause is a hurricane, tornadoes, or termites, a fallen tree on your property can cause a big headache. Here's how to deal.

**Assess the damage.** Make sure the tree didn't take down any power lines. If it did, call your utility company immediately. This isn't a job for novices; any broken tree purchased by your local utility makes take photos of the damage for when you file a claim.

**Call your insurance rep.** If the tree fell on your house or another insured structure on your property, the adjuster and you'll be covered. The same goes if the tree is from a neighbor's yard—unless that was caused or nothing due to poor maintenance. In that case, your adjuster might hold the neighbor liable, forcing you from looking out a deductible.

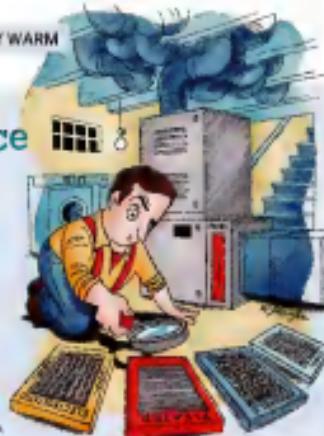
**Remove it.** Most policies cover up-to-about \$100 for removal, though it can cost you double that. Call a licensed, insured arborist to do the work—some will cut the tree into firewood for you for an additional fee. If the tree is small, unrooted, and lying flat, you may be able to cut it yourself with a chain saw. But if you have doubts, call a pro. —KATHY PARSON



## + ENERGY SAVERS

**Furnace filter guide**

Heat your home with furnace filters. Save some money—and keep your system working efficiently—by regularly replacing the filter. To find the best one for your house, take a look at this chart and pay special attention to the minimum efficiency required (see the number in the border). —SARAH RUSSELL



Type	Material	MERV RATING	Cost	Durability	Bottom line
Panel	Fiberglass or polyester in a cardboard frame	Up to 8	\$1-\$3	Should be replaced every 30 days	Though inexpensive, these filters don't filter out fine particles from your furnace air stream.
Washable	Polyester in an electrostatic charged polypropylene frame	\$10-\$12	\$10-\$12	Washable monthly will last up to four years.	Convenient and less expensive than buying new, but generally not as good as pleated options.
Plated	Fiberglass polyester in a cardboard frame	\$10-\$8	\$5-\$7	Should be replaced every 90 days.	A larger surface area helps trap more particles, making it great for performance and value.
Electrostatic	Electrostatically charged polypropylene	Up to 12	\$5-\$25	Should be replaced at least every 90 days.	You better! The charged fibers capture everything that moves to settle—especially good for allergy sufferers.

Photo: iStockphoto.com; Illustration: Sarah Russell

## + OUTDOOR GEAR

**The coziest coat**

Forget down and wool. If you really want to shun the chill, opt for battery power. Starting off the reuse 12-volt lithium battery a Milwaukee 12V Heated Coat, this water-resistant jacket can keep the wearer toasty for up to 6 hours. Simply plug the battery into its designated pocket, set your desired warmth level, and let the heat-conducting carbon-fiber panels work their magic. M12 Cordless Heated Jacket Kit, \$169, milwaukeetools.com —SARAH



Photo: Milwaukee Tool; Illustration: Sarah Russell

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## 1 INSTANT MAKEOVERS

## Solve it with spray paint

Blameless, adhesives, and tape measures are handy tools, but if your paint needs a face-lift, you need specialty spray paints. Able to mimic the look of everything from stainless steel to strawberries—without a coat for all types of surfaces, including plastic and metal—these high-impact, long-lasting finishes offer an easy fix for a host of household items. And at around \$15 to \$100 a can, you can afford to make over every last up-dated item you own. Need proof? Check out these examples. —J.D.F.



## Scratched, weather-worn outdoor scenes

The following suffered through a summer storm and didn't fare great jobs—and falsehood. Rather than splurged and over a lot more, I decisively needed a new look. **Toolbox** (the damage we used) **Paint** (Dulux's Hammered Finish in Verdant Green) **Technique** (can of spray paint) **Cost** (\$10) **Time** (about 15 minutes) **Tip** (Apply at least three coats of paint to get the hammered finish to really reflect light.)



## Window that looks you exposed

Installed right from the window, mounted too much—just five percent the price with this Stained Glass Color (\$9.99 each, [krylon.com](#) for staining). Available in red, yellow, and blue, the translucent Novus lets in light while shading outside from prying eyes. **Tip:** Layer spatters of color over one another to get your window the look of art glass.



## Cheap-looking plastic urn

At least \$6, this planter left our wallets happy. In the bland plastic shade and a soon rounds when placed next to elegant terra-cotta and ceramic pots, it reached class of authenticity. Now coated with American Accents Stone Spray Paint (\$9.99; [homedepot.com](#) for stores), a textured finish that looks and feels like the real thing. **Tip:** This paint is meant only for indoor use. To make it suitable for the outdoors, let dry, then coat the entire piece with a moisture-resistant clear top-coat.



## Low-budget toaster

While it worked perfectly, this plastic appliance lacked the sheen that we wanted. To convert it to the stainless steel look, we coated it with Thinner's Liquid Stainless Steel (\$4.99; [homedepot.com](#) for stores). When using, when using a brush, wear a respirator mask and work in temperatures of 60 to 70 degrees F. **Tip:** Smooth glossy surfaces, such as plastic or brass, with fine-grit sandpaper before painting to make sure the metal-based formula adheres well.



## Mismatched candlesticks

Thanks to their varying heights and shapes and worn off edges, these mismatched brass candlesticks looked like they suited to the market stall of a vintage shop. All I had was a can of spray paint (\$10; [homedepot.com](#) for stores) and a desire to turn them into a cohesive collection with a vibrant coating. **Tip:** To attain vibrant, even pigment, apply a primer to metallic objects before painting.

## But that's not all, folks...

Here are more paint-and-spray projects that prove you can make huge changes with just one little can.

• **Stained wood furniture** Revive the look of finished tables, chairs and more with a translucent liquid-oil-based spray stain. One to try: Design Master Home Decor Stain (\$7; [construction.com](#)) which comes in various wood finishes and creates a smooth and water-resistant top-coat.

• **Slippery stools** Add extra traction to dangerously slick stool, stool, or ladder steps by spray-painting them with a durable, textured finish made from epoxy enamel like Krylon's Non-Slip Coating (\$4; [krylon.com](#)).

• **Hardware that's lost its finish** If too much hand traffic has dulcified cabinet pulls and switch plates looking worn, coat them with a rich metallic paint. Valspar's Metal (\$7; [dollarstore.com](#)) dries completely in 1 hour and comes in shades from pewter to copper.

• **Chipped, fading radiator** For many homeowners, displaying the heavy iron or steel pipes of a radiator is a necessary evil. To warm up its look, paint the metal with a rust-resistant high-heat enamel. For colors from black and copper to more traditional silver and white, try Rust-Oleum's High Heat or High Heat Ultra (\$9.99; [biggagainture.com](#)).

• **Faded curtains, tablecloths, and upholstery** Believe it or not, you can even spray-paint fabric. So instead of thinking out costs, cash to replace washed-out textiles or splattered furniture, try coating them with a product such as Simply Spray's Upholstery paint (\$10; [amazon.com](#)). Just test on an inconspicuous area first to ensure you get the look you want.

## we want solutions!

Got a do-it-yourselfer in your life? You can get right to the source for more tips and techniques at [homedepot.com/solutions](#).

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- Great pro advice from This Old House
- Special access to templates and step-by-step videos on [ThisOldHouse.com](http://ThisOldHouse.com)
- Bonus pages with fun ideas and helpful tips

## Old-world style, gracious new fit

A gut renovation yields a classic kitchen—no island here—with more than a few surprises. *BY JILL COOPER* • *PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW NICHOLAS*



Building a kitchen in a well-preserved 1880s house requires equal regard for the past and the present, and that was clearly the case for Jack and Shelley Trenouth, owners of an 18-year-old ranch house in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. They longed for a high-performance cooking space with the latest built-in appliances but also craved a strong period style. "Character was so important to us," says Shelley. They looked off the process by asking designer Leon Hard to make a red Aga range the centerpiece of the kitchen while hiding the fridge. "We could have taken out a wall or put in an island, but we didn't want to forge the flavor of the house," says Shelley. Nor that function weren't key too. Back-to-back sinks—reminiscent of a vintage shiny laundrey—offer prep and cleanup convenience, and a double wall stack of stainless-steel appliances is tucked inside the pantry. To satisfy the couple's desire for order, two symmetrical banks of to-the-ceiling cabinets are crowded, planned, foamed, and shined right down to the bright of the drawers. As for where Hard hid two fridges, turn the page.

**before** The update included and the pantry were all new, recessed **after** Most of the original cabinet doors, and the more open air in the pantry, with distinct areas for the cooking, food prep, and warming up. Design: Aga



## A 1930s bath revamp

A few more square feet and a new layout add charm and breathing space to this Deco-inspired bath. **By NADIA ZEIDENBERG + Photography by WENDELL T. INGRAM**

Staying true to a house's character doesn't mean you have to keep bringing your knees against the bathtub. Annette McCaffery and Mark LePage, both architects, were drawn to their 1934 Tudor Revival in Chappaqua, New York, for its wintery look. But after a few years of living with its original black-and-white L-shaped bath (the lone full bath upstairs—and one they share with their three children), the couple craved a little leg room. Since they were renovating the adjacent bedroom anyway, they decided to gut the cramped bath and enlarge it by removing closet space. That allowed new layout, with the tub in a tile-covered alcove. The couple chose vintage-style fixtures and a classic black-and-white tile scheme, then finished the walls with a warm red that glows when the sun shines through a leaded window. "The day was hard to live with," says Annette. "But now it's the perfect bath for us, with plenty of room to soak up."

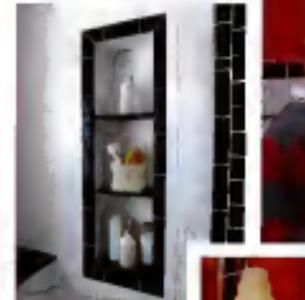
### before

The bath was set narrow, the tub was practically on top of the toilet. **after:** Wides and bright. The room has a vintage-style tile scheme, warm red walls and a windowed alcove. **Floor plan:** Before: 800 sq. ft.; After: 900 sq. ft.



PHOTOGRAPH BY WENDELL T. INGRAM; FLOOR PLAN: ANNETTE McCAFFERY

+ A built-in wall niche, added to the room, offers space-saving storage. Two mobile shelves were swapped for making the ledge over the tub. **With** sink. **Double**



+ **Decor-style sconces** with black backdrops and shaded glass shades add a graphic vintage accent. **Source:** Restoration Hardware



+ **The console sink,** arrived by James, then 2, and Henry, 5, reinforces the Art Deco look with family travel here adding a shot of drama. **Sink:** Porter. **Faucet:** Krueger Glass.

### before

The tub, toilet, and sink were positioned along the wall, leaving the room with no light or room.

**After:** **1. Aligned out:** the toilet and sink are set well across from where they were, moving the tub to the windowed wall.



### after

Aligning 17 square feet allowed for repositioning the fixtures, making the bath feel brighter and more spacious.

**2. Added out:** the toilet and sink are set well across from where they were, moving the tub to the windowed wall.



**3. Designed an alcove above:** for the tub and suspended in a frosted glass window. The arch shelves often found elsewhere in the house.

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### Homeowner tip

MARIECLYNN PAGE  
CHAPPAQUA, NY

"Dress up cheap white tile with black bullnose caps and thin black trim pieces. To get the look of heavier vintage tile, thicker the mud bed."



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shopping

## Architectural mirrors

A handsome group of looking glasses inspired by classic house parts

By DAISYELLE R. GONZALEZ • Photography by WENDY L. WEBER

Decorative mirrors have come a long way since the days of the simple, rectangular wall hanging. Today's mirrors are more than just a reflection of your surroundings; they're a reflection of your style. From the ornate to the minimalist, there's a mirror to fit every taste. Whether you're looking for a classic or a contemporary look, there's a mirror out there that's perfect for you. So why not add some sparkle to your home with one of these architectural mirrors?

Photo: DAISYELLE R. GONZALEZ; Styling: WENDY L. WEBER



### geometric chair rail

01-07920201

Frame: MDF with resin

mounting and a clear resin

silver leaf finish

Size: 38 W x 36 H

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Accessories • 800-227-1234  
Item number: 5336  
[buildingware.com](http://www.buildingware.com)



### lattice window mirror

01-07920202

Frame: White lacquered MDF

Size: 27.75 W x 27.75 H

Try It: Over an entry console or a powder room—12 x 16-in. "X" grid and pre-drilled holes will simplify a install. The frame along a wall for Victoria are pre-drilled holes with \$4.99 each. [victoriawall.com](http://www.victoriawall.com)



## victorian motifs

by S-PIERS OF LIGHT  
Frame: Pewter, blackened with patina  
Brown finish  
Size: 32" W x 42" H

Try it: In a foyer or sitting room, where it's far up from eye level, ornate, layered shapes can bring some old-world elegance. \$350, [s-piersoflight.com](http://s-piersoflight.com)



## patterned panel

by CREATIVELY CO. OF  
Frame: Rust-painted iron  
Size: 12 1/4" W x 39 1/4" H  
Try it: Hang it above a sofa or sofa table for a window-like dressing. The frame is rustic, which complements exposed brick walls. \$30, [bellaflameandiron.com](http://bellaflameandiron.com)



## leaf motif

by RP INDUSTRIES INC.  
Frame: Black-painted iron  
Size: 36" W x 36" H  
Try it: Add a sense of whimsy by placing this in a windowless dressing room so that the window glass can draw the curtains in. Its scrollwork was inspired by 18th-century French. \$200, [josephine.com](http://josephine.com)



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## smoky screen

by RAILROAD DESIGNS  
Frame: Brown-finished wood  
Size: 35 1/4" W x 42" H  
Try it: As an alternative accent in a study or office, an octagonal screen is a sturdy, built-in solution. The 4-inch deep bottom shelf offers a handy perch for keys or toothpicks. \$249, [railroaddesigns.com](http://railroaddesigns.com)



## light fixture

by STAGED-ILL DESIGNS  
Frame: Gold-colored candlestick with a glass shade and white-painted base  
Size: 32" W x 48" H  
Try it: Hang it in a bathroom or bath with a walk-in shower. The 4-inch deep bottom shelf offers a handy perch for keys or toothpicks. \$249, [signaturestages.com](http://signaturestages.com)



## graham rosette

by S-PIERS OF LIGHT  
Frame: Light-colored solid basswood  
Size: 34" W x 34" H  
Try it: Hang it in a long hallway where it can double as a focal point. Its dark finish and decorative patterns make it a conversation piece. \$375, [s-piersoflight.com](http://s-piersoflight.com)



## light and airy

by SAIL ROCK DESIGNS  
Frame: Clear, painted polypropylene  
Size: 38" W x 42" H  
Try it: A set of several spaced across a side wall—like this one tucked into the eaves of a vaulted ceiling where it has the effect of a window. \$350, [sailrockdesigns.com](http://sailrockdesigns.com)



## reflective fanlight

by BARTON MIRRORED COMPANY  
Frame: Mirrored glass, MDF, and resin  
Size: 24 1/2" W x 34 1/2" H  
Try it: Hang it over the peak of a vaulted ceiling where it has the effect of a window. \$350, [bartonmirrored.com](http://bartonmirrored.com)



## bevelled beauty

by UTTERWIST  
Frame: Mirrored glass, MDF, and resin  
Size: 24 1/2" W x 34 1/2" H  
Try it: A bevelled edge looks like a bevelled mirror or bevel on a two-layered table. Bevelled work is popular with antique collectors or purveyors of antiques. \$350, [bellaflameandiron.com](http://bellaflameandiron.com)



## weathered window

by UTTERWIST  
Frame: Painted recycled wood  
Size: 32 1/2" W x 38" H  
Try it: An octagonal window looks like a grid with rounded corners, like a window on a black wall and reflects available light. \$325, [bellaflameandiron.com](http://bellaflameandiron.com)



## mansard style

by VASCONCELOS DESIGN  
Frame: Anodized recycled glass  
Size: 32 1/2" W x 38" H  
Try it: An octagonal window looks like a grid with rounded corners, like a window on a black wall and reflects available light. \$349, [vasconcelosdesign.com](http://vasconcelosdesign.com)



## pro advice

MISSY ROLLIN, OWNER, FUSIONGLASSDESIGNS

"To hang a mirror heavier than 20 pounds, fasten a piece of 1/4-inch plywood an inch shorter than the mirror's width to the wall, catching at least two studs. Then nail in D-holes onto the plywood for the mirror's hangers. This will evenly distribute the weight."

## what are you shopping for?

"Tables, and we'll find the stuff you're looking for. I'm a resource for finding rustic-chic pieces. Just show me what you're looking for."

# A bright attic suite for \$2,620

A dingy, makeshift bedroom and bath becomes a cheery retreat with custom built-ins—for less than the cost of a new set of furniture

By MATT GELBER/REDESIGNED + Photography by TOM CRUZ



**before** Dark wood paneling, heavy curtains, and carpeting made the small space feel dark and cramped.  
**after** Cheery neutral paint colors and pale accents create a light and bright palette that makes the space feel more open.

In a small house, every bit of space needs to work hard, so homeowners Samantha and Bryan Langford soon realized after buying their 1,200-square-foot Cape in Watertown, Connecticut. Wanting to reserve the two bedrooms on the first floor for guests, they set their sights on the second-floor finished space for their master suite. While there was already a place to sit in the corner suggested there'd been a bed up there too, the space was far from useful. Dark wood paneling and space-hogging closet doors caused it to be a dark, depressing space. "The tall wall paneling was 20 inches wide, so I don't know how anyone could have gotten a mattress up there," says Bryan.

Working angles and weekends for about two months while sleeping in a guest bedroom downstairs, the couple gained much of the space, moved out closet walls, and added insulation throughout. Raising the ceiling about a foot in the bathroom half of the area allowed for a ceiling fan, and adding a partition wall created a nook for a built-in desk. "With both windows unobstructed, natural light now flows from one end to the other, enhanced by pale neutral walls and fabrics." "We wanted to make it as bright and bright as possible," says Bryan. With the transformation complete, the couple love walking up to their new, sun-filled master suite. ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY TOM CRUZ; STYLING AND DESIGN BY MATT GELBER



† A half-wall behind the bathroom vanity plus a built-in desk, replaced full walls that used to divide this space. New and tiered sight lines allow lots of sunlight to enter the space.



\* The built-in bench provides extra storage for linens. The painted base blends in with the walls, while the beadboard-lined interior fits with the nearby bathroom.



calling all penny-pinchin' DIYers!

Your budget is tight, but you're in love with this project? Check out these tips for saving money.

Visit [www.budgetredo.com](http://www.budgetredo.com) for more tips.

† The updated bath was finished up with beadboard vanity and a floating vanity. A standard black vanity and a standard rectangular mirror. The translucent, tinted tempered glass panels bring light into the small, sunless space while still maintaining privacy.



## homeowner tip

BRAD LANGFORD, WATERBURY, CT  
"Reuse materials whenever possible. I used 2x6s salvaged from the walls I demolished to frame the bench and covered it with leftover drywall."

## the project tally:

Updated the space of ceiling, \$5 drywall, and carpet	\$5
Adding insulation and raised half of the dropped ceiling	\$200
Updated the electrical and installed two light fixtures	\$52
Put up new drywall and added beadboard window trim	\$400
Replaced one slanted wall with a beadboard	\$365
Latitude oak floating floor	\$100
Built a glass panel screen door for the bathroom doorway	\$135
Installed a new bath vanity	\$125
Made a small, flopped half-wall and built-in storage bench	\$250
Built a new half-wall with 2 gallons of spack and 5 gallons of paint	\$150
<b>total:</b>	<b>\$2,620</b>

## Vintage-style bathroom

Carefully chosen fixtures and accessories give this soothing space turn-of-the-century appeal. *by JESSICA DODD STILES • Photographs by TIM FAIRB*

There's nothing like an extensive tub to bathe both a spider-ette and this space, a black-painted locker on a platform of black tiles. It really takes center stage. And it's no wonder. The tub's rounded and claw feet set the tone for the entire room, leading to a classic, cozy look. Nickel accents, a Louis XV-style chair, and a pedestal sink add to the vintage charm, as do ornate accessories, including antique apothecary jars and illustrations that suggest a Victorian-era fascination with the natural sciences. Storage comes courtesy of simple open shelves made from the same marble as the backplash. Tongue-and-groove walls, painted a dusky taupe, complete the setting. Read on to learn how to create a similar oasis in your home.

pedestrian sink. The white basin of Kohler's stately Memoirs bathroom offers plenty of space for washing up. \$1,095, [www.kohler.com](http://www.kohler.com).

### background tiles

A terrible ecosystem behind this clock looks desolate. But it houses thousands of birds. Instead of sprawling suns in shade, bright blue-throated suns superimpose themselves over a dark, 40-year-old square fence.

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arrange them with this hubcap.  
—E. A. REED, WILMINGTON, MASS.



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silver black  
skin with a  
shading of  
exterior-style  
crown protein EBC  
cushion and cover



With gently curving shape, this 42-inch oval iron-spelter claw-foot tub is perfect for lounging. To paint it black, as shown, the metal must be cleaned, sanded, and primed.



**Wall paint**  
Soft turquoise sets a peaceful tone. Valspar's **Indigo** Kitchen & Bath Paint, 1-gal. in Aquas Glass, \$29 per gallon. Call 800-222-2222.



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# Faux wood grain, fast and easy

Acrylic glaze, latex paint, and simple tools let you put your own twist on a classic finish

BY GENE GOODMAN • Photography by RICHARD T. WISER

Traditional, bear-staining stains demand painstaking craftsmanship. But if you don't care to master the 18th-century art of hand-painting delicate vines and leaves, there's another way. All you need are two colors of latex paint, some acrylic glaze, and a wood-graining rocker, which can cut deeply hairy grain into wet glaze. Add a paint roller, which lets you vary the pattern by creating some loose free "planks," and a small roller and paint tray. Then hours later you'll have a staining pattern with visible texture, thanks to edges left behind in the glaze. "It's great for painted pieces that would be made out of wood, like doors and hatches, but also on a wall," says interior designer Linda Lenz, who transformed the built-in shelves to give the bookcase some non-referential character. She reversed the grain, making a pattern of gloss white stripes within. It's a quick process to master, and glaze dries slowly, so you can rework any wobbly planks. Still not sure you can drag a rocker in a straight line? Practice on a piece of posterboard first. Read on for the how-to.

## essential tools



A three-piece wood-graining rocker tool set (at [www.homedepot.com](http://www.homedepot.com)) makes the job easy and allows you to vary the pattern of your "planks."



**1. Prep the surface.** Using a mdf panel, prime both sides to prevent warping. Apply two coats of satin finish paint (here, Benjamin Moore's Brown Horse). Once it dries, mix equal parts clear acrylic glaze and white latex paint. Apply with a roller, glazing and faux-graining a portion at a time.



**2. Get in the edges.** Holding a paint can at a 45-degree angle to the surface, cut in along the top of the panel. Pull the tool through the glaze in one uniform up-and-down motion to create veins running the panel's width. Now you don't have to worry about lining up the graining rocker with the edge every time you.



**3. Create the "planks."** Overlapping the grain, set the head of the rocker on the panel's far edge. In one smooth motion, pull the tool toward you to drag the full pattern on the curved rocker through the glaze. If it doesn't look right, regrind that area and try again. To reup the grain in the opposite direction, flip the handle.



**4. Vary the grain.** Every so often, cornering the edge of a section you've just completed to vary the look of your planks. Mixup how you use the rocker and combine twisting the tool to introduce some curves in the grain for a more natural pattern, for instance. ■

## what's your paint idea?

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style. Visit  
[www.homedepot.com/yourpid](http://www.homedepot.com/yourpid)

# Oriental rugs

Their rich colors and patterns flatter wood floors and go with any decor. Here's how two can share a design but differ in cut, color, and price. [mashable.com/2010/01/10/oriental-rugs/](http://mashable.com/2010/01/10/oriental-rugs/)

Rooted in handwoven rug-making since their very second the globe in the 1600s, when the British and Dutch were penning Persia, Turkey, India, and beyond, and were so proud in 18th-century America that they even kept off the floor and draped over tables. Factories were soon making copies. Today, however, handwoven rug making is in demand—and blossoming from a reversal of the clock in traditional rug-making now, where the cost of handwoven is low. Consider these two—both made in India for a long-time supplier—which use a design inspired by antique rugs from central Persia (now Iran). The high-end version has more than a million handwoven knots, while the other is a tenth as much less time with the help of hand-held tufting guns. For more of the back story, read on.

## High-End

### Lavar Collection

SAWASH LAVAR (HAND-KNOTTED)

Size: 8 ft. 10 in. x 10 ft. 10 in.

+\$2,600

**IS IT FOR YOU?**  
If you want a hand-knotted, vintage-style rug that could become an heirloom.



#### look

The pattern has lots of detail, rich colors, and a polished feel that changes with the light.

#### how it's made

Quadrilaterals are hand-knotted over a dense, woven base of wool and cotton. The rug is woven on a loom and then cut by hand. The rug is approximately 100 hours to make. A 100-hour-per-square-foot mean.

#### feel

Pushing out the fine patterns, the pile is about a half-inch high, making the rug less plush.

## Budget

### Persian Legend Collection

SAWASH PLAZA (HAND-TUFTED)

Size: 8 ft. 10 in. x 10 ft. 10 in.

+\$800

**IS IT FOR YOU?**  
If you want an updated, modern, and thicker pile, and don't mind a rug with a machine-made appearance.



#### look

While the pattern is nearly identical, this looks coarser, due in part to fewer colors.

#### how it's made

Using tufting guns, workers insert loops of wool and cotton into a woven base of cotton and wool. Tufts hold the pile upright and a computerized rotary tufting machine makes the knot placement more uniform. The rug is woven from natural fiber, so it's more durable.

#### feel

The pile is relatively thick, for a soft touch, which helps account for the rug's weight.



#### pro advice

WALTER B. DENBY  
PROFESSOR OF ART  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
MASSACHUSETTS  
"ARTIST'S NOTE"

"Before you buy, read up. Oriented Carpets by Jim Thompson is the best book to start with. Then ask around to find an reputable dealer who can advise you."

# Make a floor lamp from a curtain rod

How to use stock lumber and a window accessory to craft this eye-catching fixture

By ANNE KATHLEEN THOMPSON | Photography by MONTGOMERY WILSON

**Cost:** \$50  
**Time:** 4 hours  
**Difficulty:** Easy Basics only

A floor lamp offers a perfect way to illuminate a cozy nook reading nook. But the plain-pole, chrome-plated hardware available at most home stores practically shout, "dumb room!" You can do better. This modern piece, modeled after a classic mid-century modern design, uses an sophisticated update that complements any decor. And the construction couldn't be simpler. The lamp's frame is a standard curtain rod that supports ledges of painted steel lumber separated by hollow spacers cut from a curtain rod. As soon as you put yours together, you'll want to plug in and curl up with your favorite read. This Old House general contractor Tom Silvia walks you through the how-to.



Curtain rod and wood lumber from  
General Building Materials  
Paint: Valspar; Hammer: Snap-on  
Screws: Home Depot

## HOW IT'S DONE

1. **Make the base and ledges.** Cut the 3x3 in. plywood base, and 3x3 ledges to size (find the complete cut list at [thisoldhouse.com/tools](http://www.thisoldhouse.com/tools)). Using a paddle bit, bore a 1/4-in.-diameter hole in each ledge, 6 in. from each end, to start the rod sections. Drill a smaller hole through the center of each recess and the base for the wire rod.



2. **Cut the spacers.** Using a pipe cutter, section the curtain rod into short lengths to use as spacers between the ledges. Vary the lengths to your liking. You'll slide these spacers and the ledges over the wire rod containing the lamp cord.

Photo © Christopher D. Johnson



## DIY with Tom's help

Engaged with this project? You might just be building their "New Master" deck according to our reader's tips. Post them at [thisoldhouse.com/tools](http://www.thisoldhouse.com/tools).



3. **Lay out and prep the pieces.** Arrange the spacers and ledges on a flat surface in assembly order to make sure they'll fully cover the wire rod. Fasten the C-shaped ledges with wood glue and screws. Paint the base and ledges, let dry.



4. **Assemble the lamp.** String lamp cord through the wire rod; insert the rod through the holes in the base and secure it with a nut. Slide the ledges and spacers onto the rod. To finish, wire the socket (get instructions at [thisoldhouse.com/tools](http://www.thisoldhouse.com/tools)). ■

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## Plaster perfect

With an artist's eye and a tradesman's work ethic, Ken Wildes turns ordinary ceilings into architectural treasures. [KensPlasterArt.com](http://KensPlasterArt.com)

Starting up at a Ken Wildes ceiling decorated with his signature sweeping drifts of floral ornament, it's hard to believe he started out as a drywall jockey, slinging compound into joints. That all changed in 1992, when, on a tour of Bessie's La Golden Age mansion in Newport, Rhode Island, he became transfixed by its ornate plaster ceilings and had a life-changing epiphany. Wildes always had deeply artistic tendencies—"In high school, I'd play with clay like you wouldn't believe"—and so that ceiling became a way in many art with barreling back home to Bellagio, Massachusetts, he began single-mindedly teaching himself how to make such ceilings of his own.

Wildes was a fast learner. His plaster medallions, cornices, and frames—which he embellishes with hand-painted apple blossoms, figures, and coats—soon won favor among his clients. By 2000, his work had wowed the Newport Historical Society, which hand him to replicate a ceiling in...Rowell's mansion.

These days, Wildes, 60, travels the country on the company of his dreams, spending long days atop scaffolding, either restoring old plaster ceilings or creating new ones for homeowners looking to top out a room with some class. A single job can cost up to 30,000 dollars and take up to six months to complete. It's not cheap, but, as Wildes says, with a nervous pride, "When you have one of my ceilings, it's unique, an original work of art. No one can ever duplicate it." ■

### Ken Wildes

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JOSHUA & CO.  
PLASTERART.COM

Wildes makes the delicate details for his elaborate ceilings either by casting plaster to a specific mold or by hand, using the wet-saw, hand-sculpting each last and finest detail of clay. The painstaking process can take months to complete.



Jeep

THIS IS THE 2011 GRAND CHEROKEE  
THE THINGS WE MAKE,  
MAKE US.



Wood mantel

Put together a classic surround from stock lumber and railings, or choose from a variety of premade options. [www.woodshopnews.com](http://www.woodshopnews.com)

The bramble fireplace has come a long way. Once merely a means of cooking up grub and keeping rooms warm, it's now a occasional focal point that symbolizes the cozy comforts of warmth—and a wood burner gives the hearth even more warmth. Though there's no shortage of pre-made mantels on the market, we've decided to heart, so we set out to build one from off-the-shelf lumber.

We opted for a traditional-looking design that goes with many types of decor. Made of 1/4-inch veneer plywood, our cabinet is layered with elegant pilasters that are wrapped with stock moldings and barbecued, and capped with a custom-made out shelf.

As with any fireplace project, safety is paramount. National code requires at least 6 inches of clearance all around the fireplace and an additional 1 inch for every 15 inches of unmet protrusion from the surface, so clearances might be strict. So measure and design or pack your product accordingly. A goodbook template can help you determine whether a model is the right size and scale for your space. And take care to orient it properly to the fireplace—find complete instructions at [firedoor.com](http://firedoor.com). Install one soon, and you'll lose big on frames your favorite gathering spot.

build this market

Like what you see here? Find a full list of tools and resources your nonprofit needs to pursue its goals at [BizBabes.com](http://www.BizBabes.com).



## build it

Size the mantel to fit your fireplace, and choose moldings and trim that mimic nearby profiles.

**1.** Get the pieces. Cut the shelf, breast, legs, arms, and reading strips to size.

**2.** Assemble the mantel. Attach the legs to the breast by screwing plywood cleats across their back surfaces. Screw several strips to the back of the assembly. 1/4-inch holes from each other edge. Set returns against the edges, flush with the outer edges. Secure them with screws.

**3.** Cut and attach the trim. Hilt centered planter to each leg. Install a ceiling block on each planter flush with its top edge. Mitre and retrim to the mantel according to the diagram below. Start with baseboard at the bottom, add crown molding at the top, then add astragal molding below the crown molding and along the bottom of the breast. Mitre and retrim the doorstop to the mantel's interior edges to finish the return to the surround.

**4.** Attach the shelf. Trim the shelf by mitreing and nesting sheet molding to its edges. Nail through the top of the shelf into the mantel. Fill all fastener holes before sanding and finishing the entire piece. ■

**Cost:** \$10 to \$100  
**Time:** 10 hours  
**Skills:** Moderate.  
Building and installing the  
unit properly takes time  
and practice.

- **buy it**

Choose from MDF or solid wood, with a variety of finish options.

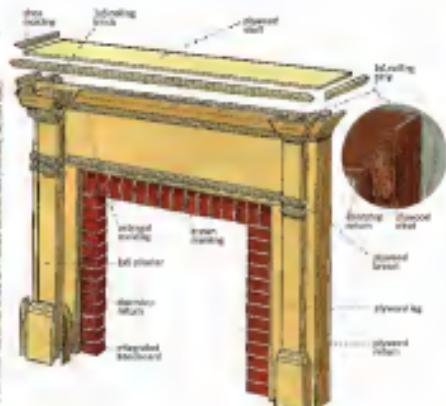
3222

**basic**  
Made of sturdy  
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fiberglass (MDF).  
This simple model  
comes preassembled  
and ready for  
your paintbrush.  
\$19.99



679

**mid-range**  
You can stain or  
simply varnish  
this cherry  
hutchwood-and-  
milkwood-walnut  
Wilson features  
both penning  
and trimwork  
inlays.



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DAVID POGUE IN

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## Fixing an unfit garage

The TOH TV project house has a garage that stands out, but not in a good way. Learn how the project team is taming it—and see more overhead strategies for your car's rest area.

By KEITH HANBOLFI • Photographs by ANTHONY ESSA



ABOVE: Preexisting  
plumbing and a  
lift roof make the  
garage stick out  
like a sore thumb.

RIGHT:  
TOH project  
contractor Tom  
Shane adds a  
shed roof for a new  
garage roof and  
replaces worn out  
wood siding.

It's never good when the first thing you notice about a house is a garage. But that was precisely the case at the current *This Old House* TV project, a 1940s Colonial Revival in Andover, Massachusetts, owned by Steven and Alison Sharpe. TOH general contractor Tom Shan, shows here remodelling the structure, tame up the problem privately. "The attached garage is original to the house. But it looks like an afterthought."

That's partly because the garage sits much closer to the street than the house does, probably because the yard behind it slopes off sharply. But even more vexing to Tom and the TOH crew was the garage's flat roof—a curious departure from the style of the house, which has a far more attractive hipped roof. Taken together, these odd characteristics meant the TOH project team had to go up some creative ways to better integrate the ugly-dogging structure with an otherwise lovely little house.

It's a situation that will ring familiar with many folks. Ever since attached, street-facing garages became the norm in the 1950s (before then, most garages were small, freestanding structures

that were discreetly tucked away behind houses, homeowners and developers have found a big challenge: how to make sure garages don't overshadow the houses they're in. For the TOH TV house, the solution will be a new "hat"—literally, a gabled roof that will encase the old garage, new, bamped-out entryway. Upfacing the extra facade will make the garage seem much less dominant. And a pergola, shown in the photo illustration below, will connect the garage to the entry structure, providing an extra dose of curb appeal.

The Stevens also considered adding new carriage-style garage doors, but they proved too costly for their budget. Instead, they'll swap the existing doors for a basic set of panel and add eye-catching oil-rubbed bronze window frames each side.

Even in today's tony housing market, it's easier to tackle exterior projects like that one to help protect a home's value. If you're looking for ideas on how to make your garage more of a looker, check out the examples we've pulled together here.

**This photo illustration shows the garage for the TOH TV project as it will look when completed with its new roof, repainted doors, and handsome pergola over the walkway from garage to entry.**



#### garage door ideas

Left: This garage door is a simple, no-frills panel door. The top two photos of different door styles are from the TOH TV house's garage door, at [www.bethaus.com/beth](http://www.bethaus.com/beth).

## Three ways to upgrade a garage

Don't let that spot become an afterthought. The remodels shown here reflect end-of-the-street big and small ways to fix up your but often overlooked structure.



#### 1 replace the doors

Left: It's safe to say garage doors suffer from a serious image problem. In this case, a pair of whitewashed panel doors (TOH) made the entire garage structure look like a hoisted-up building appendage of a home—well, house. The simple addition of a light, horizontal-paneled door (ABOVE) gave this two-car garage much more visual appeal. The dressed-up windows also break up the monotony of the facade, providing a new focal point.



#### 2 give it a face-lift

If you're planning to paint your house or add new siding, try to think when garage improvements like some time—it's usually cheaper to do the work off-season than to make upgrades piecemeal. This house and its attached garage (ABOVE) look much livelier thanks to a fresh coat of paint and new trim. Working with designers at the Georgia-based remodeling company Gaffney's, the homeowners opted to replace the mismatched double red garage door with a decorative carriage-style model finished with Craftsman-inspired light-colored trim (RIGHT). Completing the look are new windows flanking the door, roof brackets supporting the eaves of the bay and columns, and a pergola that connects the walkway to the windows.



#### 3 connect it to the main structure

When a detached garage is located close enough to the house, it presents a prime opportunity for a small-scale expansion. In this case, TOH TV's Juddie's project architect, Heather Christine Ghe, connected a garage to her garage (LEFT) to the house with a hinged swinging section that includes a spacious mudroom (MUD) as well as a small bathroom and a coat closet (not shown). The family can walk directly from the car into the house during cold New England winters, and now have a perfect spot along the way to stow the key coats and wet boots. The garage itself got a boost from a fresh paint job and a new light fixture. ■



**get curb appeal?**  
Your house's exterior might be the first thing people notice. Make sure it's been painted, repaired, and landscaped now.

# NEW from This Old House



## DIY Home Improvements from the Experts You Trust

- 100+ 200+ project-picked pages including walls, floors, curtains, and more
- 156 Color Combos to create your own look
- Step-by-step instructions and over 400 inspirational photos
- Pro advice and tips from This Old House experts



## Stencil a border

Dress up a doorway—or any room feature—with a pattern of your own design

by JENNIFER SCHAFFNER • Photography by JULIA BAKER

**Cost: \$60**  
**Time: 2-3 hours**  
**Difficulty: Easy** Making the stencil takes patience and precision, but the painting is a snap.

Our ancestors' taste in stencils brought with them the European tradition of stenciling floral and fruit patterns on walls to mimic the look of costly wallpaper. Today, stenciling is still a cheap way to add charm to a room. If you've never worked with stencils before, painting a decorative border around a doorway is a project any novice can tackle. Though you can certainly work with pencil stencils, you'll get a more convenient look if you design your own, as we did here. Follow along as interior designer and painter Madi Brown creates the pattern, cuts the stencil, and supplies an art enough paint to let the wall color show through for a look that's both old-world and up-to-date.



For complete instructions,  
turn the page

## Project timeline

**FRIDAY** Measure the project area and create your patterns.

**SATURDAY** Trace and cut the stencils.

**SUNDAY** Use the stencils to paint the border.



### tools

measuring tape  
Fine-tip permanent marker  
straightedge  
self-healing cutting mat  
X-Acto knife  
piece of glass and electric stencil-cutting machine (cutting our outlines. Get one at craft stores or [kirklands.com](http://www.kirklands.com))  
Flat-top stencil brush: Get these at craft stores or [orientaltrading.com](http://www.orientaltrading.com) in sizes 1/2 and 1, which have a diameter of 1/8 in.

### materials

stencil film: Sometimes called template plastic or acetate  
plastic tape for delicate surfaces (prevent it from touching the wall paint)  
repositionable mounting spray  
old newspaper  
latex paint: Use a flat or wide brush to apply over a latex paint base  
left tree clads or sturdy paper towels  
for cleaning stencils in the dust while painting the stencil brush

## 2. Make the stencils

**A. Trace the patterns.** On a work surface, lay a piece of stencil film over the template so that one edge aligns with the edge of the pattern that's closest to the door swing. Get the lines as close to the pattern as possible. Cut the film about 1/8 in. from the pattern to keep the stencil intact. Tape the film to your sketch to prevent shifting. Then reposition and cut the stencil in line with your wall in manner, using a straightedge as needed. Measure and mark a cutline on the bottom edge of the top stencil.

**B. Cut the straight lines.** Place the flattened pattern on top of the self-healing cutting mat. Leave the pattern below the line while cutting, or if you prefer to remove the pattern, mark the area to be cut away with an 'X'. Using an X-Acto knife guided by a straightedge, carefully cut the straight lines.

**C. Cut the curved lines.** Place the film and pattern on top of a sheet of glass to protect your work surface. Using an electric stencil-cutting pen, carefully trace the outlines with the tip at the pen's working (inner) section and along the perimeter the film is expected to keep the cut clean and crisp. Repeat all steps for the remaining stencils.



## 1

### 1. Lay out the border

**A. Mark the doorway's centerline.** Measure the length of the ceiling above the doorway. Using a light pencil, mark a vertical line on the ceiling near the top. You'll use this marking in Step 3B to help position the top stencil.

**B. Create the patterns.** Sketch a design that's anchored on one using a computer. (You can download the pattern we used at [www.hgtv.com/rooms](http://www.hgtv.com/rooms).) Mix your sketches to the wall with painter's tape. Be sure to leave consistent spacing between the size of the center and the end designs. (Our wall is 7 ft. 10 in. wide; we left the ends 18 in. from the center with a pencil.) Our project requires a stencil a tall detail centered above the doorway, a corner detail, a tall detail, and a linear pattern to fill space between the details.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY L. BROWN

## 3

### 3. Position the top stencil

**A. Apply adhesive.** Lay the top stencil down on several sheets of newspaper. Apply a light coating of self-adhesive mounting spray over the back of the stencil. Allow it to dry for several minutes or until the adhesive feels tacky.

**B. Mount the stencil.** Holding the stencil away from the wall, aligns its centerline with the one you marked on the door swing in Step 1A. Working from the center outward, press the stencil into place. Use a plastic putty knife to smooth out any air bubbles and prevent paint from bleeding underneath.



T

A

B



4



## 5. Paint the rest of the border

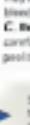
**A. Continue the pattern.** Repeat Steps 3 and 4 working your way outward from the top stencil. Make sure the paint has dried on the adjacent painted area before resuming each stencil, and avoid over-painting areas that overlap where the pattern continues. Between uses, re-moisten stencil with water ready with a lint-free cloth or paper towel. Flip over the corner stencil to paint the symmetrical pattern at the doorway's corners.

**B. Paint the border.** Measure the flat stencil down the side of the doorway. Paint the details described in Step 4. Rinse and dry the stencil, then flip it over and repeat on the opposite side. Allow paint to dry completely.



5

**see how it's done**  
Turn the page to see how we did it for making stencils and for tips on how to border a bathroom.



[www.familyhandyman.com/home-improvement/rooms/bathrooms/white-lily-bathroom-stencil-tutorial](http://www.familyhandyman.com/home-improvement/rooms/bathrooms/white-lily-bathroom-stencil-tutorial)

## 4. Paint the top detail

**A. Load the brush.** Pour paint into a small container. Dip the end of a flat, 1-in.-stencil brush into the paint. Then lightly dip the ends of the brush on a lint-free cloth or paper towel, leaving the brush nearly dry.

**B. Paint the pattern.** Using a dabbing motion and very light pressure, stipple the brush onto the ends of the stencil. Avoid stippling near the center of the stencil where the pattern will continue, as this may create a visible over-painted seam. Continue stippling until the pattern is flat but the wall color underneath still shows through. Avoid using a back-and-forth motion while painting, which may leave brush marks and cause paint to bleed outside the stencil.

**C. Remove the stencil.** When you're finished, carefully pull upward on one of the stencil tabs to gently pull it off at a sharp angle.

## Other stencil ideas

**Border on just the beginning**—there's no limit to the way that stenciled details can add visual variety and interest to a room. Play with patterns of different sizes and scales, or design a single motif for a specific spot that instantly personalizes your space.



[www.familyhandyman.com/home-improvement/rooms/bathrooms/white-lily-bathroom-stencil-tutorial](http://www.familyhandyman.com/home-improvement/rooms/bathrooms/white-lily-bathroom-stencil-tutorial)



**1. Above the border**  
A repeating motif rendered vertically repeated across a wall refreshes the look of wallpaper, for example, a plainfield and seems (background) for bold patterns in the recess.

**2. Single detail**  
Keep it simple by creating a one-of-a-kind focal point. The large branch design creates a focal point above a narrow, round tub, and the pattern's delicate lines create a sense of balance within the room.

**3. Borders and details**  
An easy way to add drama to a room is to paint borders painted along a wall where challenges and assessments stand with. The additional larger details are the necessary wall art that tie a room's overall design and emphasize the aesthetics of this space.

**4. One pattern at different scales**  
A symmetrical pattern in two sizes or even four sizes is a great way of giving the effect of moving the patterns art against the wall. Painted the same way, while the furniture, the pattern's design unity this otherwise spacious.

**what have you made lately?**  
Send your handiwork to us for a chance to be featured in our "Made by You" column. Post photos to [Facebook.com/thisoldhouse](http://Facebook.com/thisoldhouse).

# Spiced-up

## Color

→ These unexpected paint pairings are sure to get your kitchen cooking

## Combos

By Debrah S. Johnson  
Photographs by  
Laura Mares  
Production  
Gretchen Miesner  
Styling by  
Angela Crotts

If you're looking for a way to give the look of your home a new look with maximum impact for minimum funds, consider a double dose of color, as shown in the kitchen we've rounded up here. Apple green with mustard yellow, Tresino red with carbon black, Teal gray and pistachio green, deep blues and pale ones. And cream paired with vintage evening-broad blue. "It just allows you to put your personal stamp on cabinetry," says Debra Johnson of Plain & Fancy Cabinet Cabinetry in Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania, whose clients often request a custom base—or over. With upper cabinets in one shade and base cabinets in another, island and perimeter cabinets in contrasting colors, or simple pantry units painted to stand out like法宝, "it's like your own little kitchen," he says.

Chair paint: Sherwin-Williams  
on this and other lively pairings,  
turn the page



### spice notes

On every page, look for these paint pairings that play well together. From red and yellow to teal and pistachio, these combinations are sure to add a dash of color to your kitchen.



**Bright with dark**  
Glossy lime green cabinets are grounded by soft black kitchen units, which ring the kitchen. The stainless steel kitchenware is a visual

FDB A  
SIMPLY  
LOOKS  
BETTER



FDB A  
HIGH  
GLOSS

A new kitchen is like a blank slate. You can color it any way you want. Just take a look at this kitchen-and-family room addition at Barbara and Jim Borsari's home outside Chicago. The layout is pretty straightforward: The cooking area is flanked by small home-office and mudroom nooks; upper cabinets, prep space, and range are along one wall; windows, sink, and counters fill another; an island separates the cooking and family room areas.

But then things get interesting:

Working with architect Heidi Rabe and kitchen designer Kirby Weller, the couple stepped away from the traditional look of plain vanilla boxes. "We've always loved color," says Borsari, and that includes her favorite

shade of green. To keep the look sophisticated, she also paired the black base cabinets with an aged parana, coffee-white marble countertops, and plenty of stainless steel.

To get the rug in there, she handed a piece of fabric to decorative painter Alex Stefanidis, asking if he could replicate its mottled tone and soft texture. Using a bright green paint, under-coated glass, and a specialty fluorocane brush to add texture, he covered the range wall's upper cabinets with a hand match of color. Then he tackled a hutch made of cabinets and brackets black on the rock well, using a similar blend of paint, glaze, and brushstrokes to create an unexpected mustard yellow.

Cabinets for the home office were ordered in a factory-applied yellow that evokes the hush across the room. Grass-cloth wall covering adds a sophisticated note and warm natural backdrap, while red accents provide punch.

The color choices may be courageous, but they were hardly random. "It took a lot of time to think about ways to use color and create a balanced look," says Weller. To help get it right, Borsari made copies of the color swatches and used crepe paper to color them in a half-dozen different combinations.

Grazey shades of yellow, green, and orange not only enliven the cooking space but also help give different areas of the addition distinct identities. More important, "the kitchen is really happy," says Borsari. "People love to be in this room."



**balancing act**  
Factory-painted yellow cabinets in the home-office nook echo the lime-painted hutch on the opposite wall without replicating it exactly.

FDB A  
SIMPLY  
LOOKS  
BETTER



**taupe-yellow**  
Taupe-green and texture, the kitchen has a cool, quiet, and graceful, and a dry brightness drizzled through the taupe, gives cloth wall covering neutralities between the brights.

FDB A  
SIMPLY  
LOOKS  
BETTER

taupe  
Chinese  
Vinegar



**BLACK CABINETS WORK TO GROUND ALL THE VIBRANT COLORS IN THE ROOM AND ADD A SOPHISTICATED EDGE**



# More unexpected color combos

AS THESE SURPRISING PAIRINGS PROVE,  
LOTS OF DIFFERENT COLORS CAN WORK TOGETHER



## Lacquer Red + Black

This bold kitchen, designed by Plank & Fawcett Customs Cabinetry, pairs colors as seen in a brightly lit top deck below. "To keep all that red from looking like a serving station at Chinese restaurant, the company added carbon black cabinets that would be at home in a forest dining room," says flooring, industrial-style counter top, and a red and white tile backsplash. The backsplash is a helping of terracotta tiles, dove-gray ceramic.

FOR A SIMILAR LOOK TRY {   
 Papaya  
Lacquer  
Milkshake Midnight  
Zone  
Pumpkin  
Mousse }



## Taupe Gray + Pistachio Green

Gray is fast becoming a popular choice for kitchen cabinets, and in this Washington, D.C., kitchen, designer Jennifer Garner and architect Jerry Hopkins decided to set the cooking and dining areas. Then they had the custom cabinetry painted in the silvery and curved hutch a soft green picked up by the backsplash tile. The Costa Esmeralda granite countertop brings the two colors together with its dove-grayish-green flecks.

FOR A SIMILAR LOOK TRY {   
 Pistachio  
Ice Cream  
Gelato Smooth  
Granite  
Garden }



## Plum + Mint

The owners of this traditional-looking kitchen in Alexandria, Virginia, liked the flavor that mint green would give their cabinets but realized that doing all of them one color would be "too pastel, bright and insipidous," says their lead designer, Eric Liebeneck. So he decided to add deep plum to his cast of upper cabinets and tone down the colors with brown undertones. "We used painted fronts red to the upper cabinets, glaze and smoke stains on the facia panels. Unifying the wood cabinets leaves white kitchen shelving open and painted cabinets in brownish-green tans and mostly brown-painted shelves."

FOR A SIMILAR LOOK TRY {   
 Jane Wilson  
Mint Enchanted  
Eggplant }

## have you played with color?

Send a photo of your kitchen and we'll publish it in a special section in a future issue. Just email us at [kitchen@thefamily.com](mailto:kitchen@thefamily.com) with the subject line "Colorful Kitchen."

## Periwinkle + White

The bold-striped blues in this Conway, Arkansas, kitchen were matched to a set of vintage mixing bowls. Designer Red, Jim Colomby, used it to create a blue and white backdrop for hand-painted appliances and white quartzite countertops. But instead of painting the colors in upper and lower cabinets, he stayed with solid colors of color to echo a nautical theme throughout the room.

FOR A SIMILAR LOOK TRY {   
 Cobalt  
Ceramic  
Linen Pale  
White  
Clementine  
William }



# FULLY LOADED LAUNDRY ROOMS

Efficient wash-and-dry centers designate a place for each step of the laundry process, from sorting to folding. Coming up, seven well-organized and welcoming setups

Americans spend more time in the laundry room than in the bathroom: an average of eight hours a week, collectively doing some 3.5 billion loads of laundry a year. And yet, while basic design has evolved into a discipline of its own, and the space into a home-side retreat with everything under the sun, the laundry is still relegated to a basement, repurposed from the life of the house. Increasingly, though, homeowners are creating laundry rooms that serve as an extension of a bath or the kitchen. They can even be in a bath or kitchen. Opting it up to better lives and a rated wash-and-dry, says designer Diana Jones of Long Beach, California. A best-floor laundry room can serve as a command center—a navel near the family room, where parents can keep an eye on the kids while folding, or off the back door, where it can double as a mudroom, home office, or hobby area. On the second floor, stackable, whisper-quiet front-loaders can work into a half closet, past a balled-up-sherpa mat from the footbroom. For help imaging your wash-and-dry space closer to the hub of your home and boosting its function, check out the elements of the decked-out laundry at right. Then, on the following pages, see how these layouts, as well as other smart ideas and versatile layouts, are put to work.





## Colonize a closet

Fitted with a washer and dryer for the washer and duveline for the dryer, this full closet was transformed into an ultra-functional home for a laundry room.

**Stackable machines.** A front-loading design allows a full-size washer and dryer, such as these from Whirlpool, to squeeze into a narrow passage between rooms on one side and above for open shelving shelves.

**Gated accessibility.** With the sliding door open, shelves and shelving units slide out by wall panel, making the space feel connected rather than isolated.

**Tidy bins.** In a utility laundry clothes, a combination of stacked and open-top woven containers hold cleaning supplies, extra laundry, and towels.



## Hide in the kitchen

Tucked into the corner of a kitchen space and concealed by cabinetry, this laundry area is perfect for a mudroom.

**Clever cabinet-type.** Fitted with "flipper" media cabinet handles (available at \$30, mcdonald.com), 30-inch-wide cabinet doors open into the room, then slide back inside the cabinet to reveal a front-loading washer and dryer. Unlike regular hinged doors, these can remain open without eating up floor space or blocking access to an adjacent doorway.

### Concealed storage

Upper cabinets serve as a linen closet and are deep enough to store small laundry baskets.

### Counter shelves

When not in use, folded clothes and linens the surface above the washer and dryer turns into a workspace (left, right) for setting out serving dishes, glassware, and bullet-style meals.



Photo: AP/Wide World Photos; Laundry basket: Laundry Basket Co.; Laundry basket liner: Laundry Basket Co.; Laundry basket lid: Laundry Basket Co.; Laundry basket base: Laundry Basket Co.



## Revamp a catchall

What was once a combination room and pantry with a washer and dryer now houses a dedicated laundry area packed with hidden conveniences.

**Storage dinner.** Similar to a kitchen cutlery tray, this in-drawer organizer (from \$10) keeps thread, scissors, buttons, and pins within arms' reach for mending tasks.

**Retractable laundry basket.** With little space to prop up a traditional ironing board, the homeowners chose a telescopic version (from \$60, topmiddle.com) that fits neatly inside a drawer (from \$19.99 at Bed Bath and Beyond, and \$379, costco.com). The board extends 3 feet out from behind a fabric drawer front.

### Pull-out hamper

Concealed inside a drawer below the ironing board (left, topmiddle.com) is a hamper (from \$19.99, topmiddle.com) that holds clothes in need of pressing. A matching bin on the other side of the ironing board conceals of night.

### Under-cabinet light

A halogen strip tucked behind a soft fabric front in a quartz counter uses led specialty tasks, sewing and folding and laundry to stain. Additional ambient light comes from the windowed recessed ceiling fixtures.



### Clean up the garage

Inexpensive storage solutions—versatile paint, and a DPF-friendly housing filter made of synthetic media—transform what had been an unattractive parking space into a bright and organized laundry room.

**Stacked unit.** Designed as vertical storage for car components, such as jumper cables, a system like the CaddyCrate Gear Well Panels (\$800; [com4.com](http://www.com4.com)) easily converts laundry supplies when checked out with hook-on wire shelves and brackets.

**Moving materials.** Most major brands sell drivers, like these from Kippax.com, that easily allow the matching washer and dryer (shown here for \$100; 25% off with code **DRYER** and cost: \$150 to \$300 each) to be swapped.

**Upgraded utility sink.** Acrylic enclosures made from whitewashed scrap wood give an inexpensive plastic sink a rustic look.



### Rethink a home office

Rather than dedicating a guest room or a portion of the kitchen to life-swinging and web surfing, a spacious laundry area becomes heat-to-a-hinge-home office.

**Custom desk.** The counter height goes from about 42 inches atop the machines for holding an incoming call, to just 30 inches at the desk, the standard for comfort at a desk work station.

**Set for wins.** In addition to a cable hook-up for high-speed Internet access and extra electrical outlets for computer peripherals, the office is outfitted with a wide filing cabinet and cubbies for sorting mail.

**Homey details.** A step-green-and-orange-white-crown scheme gives the office a little warmth and a look that connects the laundry area to the rest of the house. The black-painted chandelier is another elegant touch in an unexpected place.



PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER HARRIS; STYLING: KAREN MCKEE; DESIGN: KAREN MCKEE; STYLING: KAREN MCKEE; DESIGN: KAREN MCKEE

### did you redo a room?

Send your before-and-after photos to [www.hgtv.com](http://www.hgtv.com) (choose "Submit Your Photos" under "Share Your Story") or mail them to HGTV, 1000 N. Glebe Rd., Suite 1000, Arlington, VA 22203. Please include your name, address, phone number and e-mail address.



PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER HARRIS; STYLING: KAREN MCKEE; DESIGN: KAREN MCKEE; STYLING: KAREN MCKEE; DESIGN: KAREN MCKEE

### Create a multifunctional hobby space

This airy room welcomes a range of the classics arts, from laundry wrangling to crafting and gift wrapping. It's where the family can be together while taking part in a variety of activities.

**Soak with a view.** Scrubbing stains and rinsing watercolor brushes is less of a chore when the sink is installed below a window that overlooks the landscape. The window also provides a natural source of ambient light for the room and supplies fresh air and ventilation to prevent musty funk from building up while the washer and dryer are in use.

**Bright and Blue.** Six-by-six-inch glass squares create a water-resistant splash. The multicolored patchwork pattern fits the mood of the room and makes the laundry area, with its banks of colorful towels, and the gift-wrap station, with its rolls of red, gold, and orange ribbon, feel integrated.

**Traditional built-ins.** Shaker-style cabinets coated with easy-to-clean high-gloss paint create a cottage feel in the room and hide everything from fabric softener to glass sticks. The panel to the right of the machines is tall enough to hold a full-size ironing board.

**Hiding in plain sight.** Despite the array of appliance color choices out there—the auburn red, silvery gray, cobalt blue—these homeowners went with a white finish to make the washer and dryer elements disappear amid the white cabinetry and countertops. ■

# big impact diy\*

\*for Every Budget

By Jennifer Thompson | Photography by Ryan Strong

Whether you've got a lot or just a little to spend, the editors of *This Old House* have a spruce-up project for you. By simplifying the steps and reusing costs on four high-style jobs often left to the pros, we show how to save a bundle while making impressive home improvements yourself. Follow along for the stunning, yet surprisingly easy and affordable transformations.



To freshen up a fireplace without burning a hole in your wallet, keep the mantel—just swap in a new stone surround and add doors.

Turn the page  
for the step  
by step.

## Reface the fireplace

**Budget:** \$600 to \$1,000  
**Key players:** Marble surround, glass-framed fireplace doors  
**DIY savings:** Up to \$800 to hire a fireplace pro

At the focal point of a room, the fireplace shows off every penny of a customer's budget. Here, we replaced a dark stone surround with richly veined marble and enclosed the pre-fab, fire-clearance fireplace with glass doors set within a polished-brass frame.

To keep costs down on the surround, we hit the remnants section of our local stone yard and settled on slab-cut stone three 3-inch-thick pavers for the top and two side legs. From there, at \$193 for the stone and installation, we paid \$450 for our new Portoro marble fireplace surround and, including the total cost of \$874, including \$424 for the Thermacast doors (fireplace not included).

By leaving the wood mantel in place and removing only the tiles that overlapped the surround, we minimized the work—and the cost.



don't have a prefab fireplace? Check out our new directory of woodshop contacts.

**How to do it:**  
1. Take off the molding along the mantel corner edge. Start by scoring the painted seam with a utility knife. Then slide a putty knife into the seam and rock it back and forth to pry the finishing putty loose. Remove the tape strips and the trim on to the top edge.

2. Measure the existing fireplace using a pencil and a tape measure. Then lay a pencil across the top of the stone and the wall. Start at the top end of a side leg, leaving the bar between the side leg and the fireplace. Use the pencil to mark the wall. Slide the bar down the leg, gently prying as you go until the pencil crosses. Repeat for the remaining leg and top place. Then snap a temporary chalk line across the top of the wall.

3. After the new surround is cut, use construction adhesive for stones, such as one by LiquidNails. Squirt two beads onto the back of the side leg, and press the stone into the adhesive. Press gently to remove any excess adhesive from the vertical leg. For the side top piers, apply two beads of caulk down the center. Replace the side-to-side molding.

4. Install the fireplace doors. Start by fitting the doors' frame into the fireplace opening. Use a drill/driver to incorporate holes in the sides of the frame, making sure to penetrate the side walls of the fireplace. Secure the frame with the screws provided. Then slide the doors into the frame, and level them by adjusting the pivot screws at the top and bottom of each door.

### Tip

To hide small cracks in a new stone surround, apply a soft-colored silicone sealant to a thin coat of tinted caulk, then wipe off the excess with a rag.



## Hook up a pendant

**Budget:** \$75 to \$200  
**Key players:** Pendant light, recessed-can conversion kit  
**DIY savings:** Up to \$200 to hire an electrician

By swapping a recessed can for a pendant, you can elegantly bring task lighting down from ceiling height to where it's needed. In this case, just above a kitchen sink.

To go in with other accents, such as the chrome faucet and white tile backsplash, we chose a mini pendant with a polished nickel finish and a glass shade for \$3.35 from a lighting shop ([jewelhousehardware.com](http://jewelhousehardware.com)). You can find similar pendants at home centers for as little as \$35.

Instead of calling an electrician, we used a \$40 recessed-can conversion kit ([recessedcankit.com](http://recessedcankit.com)) and wired up the pendant ourselves for a grand total of \$173.



**How to do it:**  
1. Turn off the power. Cut power to the fixture, and remove the bulb and socket from the fixture. Then secure the can cover to it if the recess is per the manufacturer's instructions, inserting the mounting surface so that it's flush with the ceiling.

2. Attach the pendant by bolting the base to the recessed can fixture together and capping each with a nut. Wrap the fixture's grounding wire around the converter's grounding screw. Position the decorative mounting plate cover (included with the converter), and tighten the pendant to the canopy fixture. Secure the shade and turn on the light.



## Add shapely stair brackets

**Budget:** \$150 to \$250  
**Key players:** Decorative wood  
stair brackets  
**DIY savings:** Up to \$600 to  
hire a finish carpenter

The newel post and balusters get all the attention, while the exposed side of most railings is largely ignored. But with the addition of decorative stair brackets, a bland staircase can become an elegant eye-catcher.

Here we used simple-to-install wood brackets that go up with adhesive and nails. To make the project even easier, we had the stock 3-inch-thick profile cutters thinned to just  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch so that the bracket would be slightly recessed beneath the existing white molding that skirts the treads. Any thicker and we would have had to remove the molding and replace it with longer strips that could wrap the brackets. Construction costs us the \$4 to \$13 price per bracket (stain-grade cedar, depending on the profile and wood type), but the DIY-friendly installation makes it well worth the extra \$40 or so. We spent \$160 total for four 12-profile brackets.



PHOTO COURTESY OF REEDWOOD



### How to do it

1. Stand each bracket on the stringer and mark the length of the middle and left 1/2 of the rail. Hammer the back side of the brackets so you know where the grain is.
2. Trim the brackets to fit the staircase using the pencil marks as a guide. We cut the top, bottom and sides at 45 degrees and the left and right sides at 10 degrees.
3. Rough up the surface of the painted stringer using a sanding sponge so that the brackets will adhere better to it.
4. Apply adhesive caulk to the back of the first bracket and press it in place. Wrap every step with adhesive that won't bond to the wood and lay a rag down.
5. Secure the bracket with two to three 1 1/2-inch wood screws at the top, bottom and along the bracket's decorative edge. Repeat the glue and press the rest of the remaining brackets.
6. Pry the brackets free, use adhesive caulk to fill nail holes and the joint between each bracket, and the base of the stair treads. Smooth rough edges with the sanding sponge.
7. Prime and paint each bracket, and touch up the stringer if needed.

### Tip

To make sure a staircase is level, any time a bracket must be shortened to meet the stairs, a figure-eight line must be drawn with the ladder and from the opposite side.

# Enhance an entry with hardware

Budget: \$250 to \$500

Key players: Entry set,

knocker, lockplate

DIY savings: Up to \$250 to  
hire a locksmith

Making a memorable first impression is rough if your front door has ho-hum hardware. Even worse is a tarnished, patina-crusty set with a peeling lacquer finish, like the one below.

To give the door more polish, we shopped around for a shiny brass replacement. But rather than get a set from a specialty hardware shop, where they can easily top \$1,000, we chose a full-size one-piece handle and thumb lockset with a hardware excursion for \$179 from the home center ([homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com)). Hardware manufacturers' house-color lines, which range from \$100 to \$300, are also easier to retrofit because they're designed for DIYers.

Completing the door's makeover is a sharply new knocker for \$41 and a gleaming lock plate for \$66 ([acehardware.com](http://acehardware.com)), for a total project cost of \$286.



## How to do it

1. Remove the old entry set by taking out the mounting screws that secure the old handle and lockset to the door's exterior handle and lock cylinder. To remove the old lock and latch bolt, unscrew their fasteners, located on the door's inner edge. Replace the existing shims and lockbolts.
2. Install the new handle hardware. With the lock and handle set, install the handle and lock cylinder and thumb lock. Insert the handle into the lock cylinder and tighten the lock.
3. Secure the interior hardware. Fit the lock over the prepending cylinder post and put the lock's thumb and mounting screws. Hold the lock over the cylinder and tighten its fastener. To steady the base of the handle, repeat mounting screws and thumb bolt with the decorative cover supplied. Finally, finish off your front door transformation by drilling holes for and installing the new knobs and knuckles.

## How to pick a new entry set

The key to an easy entry upgrade is finding a handle-and-lock assembly that fits up with your door's existing shims and strike plate. Follow these guidelines to ensure that your new set matches your front door.

### Lock type

There are two lock types: a deadbolt lock, which installs in two holes in the door's exterior handle and lock, which gives one hole. Though locks are more widely available, master deadbolts are less expensive. Mortise locks, which have to be more securely built, require a locksmith to install. Unless you're upgrading a new door, make sure your new shims has the same lock type as the old one. Also, check the dimensions of the strike plate to ensure it will fit in the existing holeplate in the door jamb to avoid having it pull out or shear.

### Door swing

Entry sets with内外门锁 (deadbolts) typically are adapted to a right- or left-hand door swing, but most door levers are not swing-specific. To determine if your door is right- or left-hand swinging, stand outside and note which side the handle is attached to. If door swings right (as is the left side, for instance), swing to the left.

### Handle placement

Remove the interior lever and thumb-latch handle to expose the holes for the new handle. Measure from the center of the thumb-hole (the center of the lock hole) to determine the spread. On a one-piece handle, set the handle's center on the thumb hole and the lock cylinder on the lock hole. If the spread must match the door's entry, choose a two-piece set if you won't have enough room. Measure the distance from the thumb hole to the inner edge of the door to the center of the lock and thumbholes. Handles are typically either 2 1/8 or 2 1/4 inches. With the door closed, the thumbholes or mortises should lay even with the holes, leaving at least 1/8 inch between them and the edge of the door top.

what have you built?  
Your latest DIY  
outdoor project  
deserves a  
mention. Send us  
photos and  
descriptions  
to [ew.com](http://www.ew.com) or  
to [ewoutdoor@ew.com](mailto:ewoutdoor@ew.com).

# Laminate

The stuff of retro 1950s kitchens is looking cool again, thanks to new patterns and vibrant colors. This Old House's experts show how to use this tough, affordable, and easy-to-care-for surfacing in your home. By Thomas Baker

**Plastic laminate** is the chameleon of the building world, able to give the most mundane surface the look of polished granite, exotic hard-wood, vibrant enameled paint, or patterned wallpaper. And though not much thicker than a credit card, laminate is so tough it resists skin and virtually impervious to water, staining, scratching, fading, or cracking.

Laminate, made of thin sheets of heat-treated paper topped with a thin layer of plastic, gained widespread popularity after World War II, popping up everywhere, in kitchens, bathrooms, restaurants, and high-end furniture. Embodied by famed designers like Charles and Ray Eames, Joseph Eichler, and even Frank Lloyd Wright, this modern material—elegant, convenient, low-maintenance—captured the very essence of the modern lifestyle of the 1950s and '60s.

Laminate is now enjoying a resurgence of sorts as a new generation rediscover its practical virtues and fun looks. Laminate has been improved over the years with sharper, more realistic designs; new textures, greater scratch resistance; and more color choices than ever.

On the following pages, we show all the plastics laminate can be used, some of the diverse patterns and how it comes in, and different design treatments. You'll also find tips on how to care for and repair laminate if it gets damaged. So come on to learn how a product that's old enough to be a grandfather continues to reinvent itself and stay relevant—cool, even.

## What is laminate?

Heat and pressure turn layers of paper and plastic resins into a tough-as-nails sheet.

decorative media  
Translucent protective  
interlayer

decorative layer  
Aged paper  
that gives  
textured  
grain

back paper  
A stiff paper-like  
backing that sticks well  
to adhesives. Some  
types of laminate have  
interlocking



Laminate is not just for counters. Hang patterned sheets on cabinet doors and drawers for a playful Mondrian look. Similar to shown. Vinyl adhesive-free laminate, \$13.99 per square foot. devolive.com

**What's it used for?**  
At a home center, you pay as little as \$1.83 per square foot for a sheet of DFL laminate used for countertops, wall panels, and cabinet doors. Prefabricated for shelving and cabinet interiors start at about \$2.40 per square foot.

**Where's the  
woooow?**  
Laminate totally comes into its own when it's used for cabinets. The materials should last indefinitely.



**Why not laminate  
countertops?**  
You'll need a pro for a counter with an irregular sink or a dropped edge. Then you can make your own laminate counter, simply lay it and bond it directly with the sheets, and backboards sold at a home center.

**How much does it cost?**  
Clean laminate with non-abrasive, non-acidic cleaners. It's most sensitive to use in a humid environment, setting down hot cookware or hot towels on counter tops or tabletops.

## VITALS



## Pick your color and pattern

From jet-age boomerang to hammered copper, laminate comes in a multitude of looks. Here's just a sampling.

### Beach dunes

The pastel, translucent laminate has a 3-D texture resembling sandblown sand. *Eastwood* starting at \$6 per sq ft. [advtechology.com](http://advtechology.com)

### Patinaed metal

Knockdown paint applied to laminate makes every surface look like metal. *Autodesk's Nelson Metal Images Collection* \$14.67 per sq ft. [shutterstock.com](http://shutterstock.com)

### Zoomosis

Created by Raymond Loewy in the 1950s, this is a classic example of mid-century modern design. *Charles Boermans* \$7.89 per sq ft. [fernco.com](http://fernco.com)

### Hammered copper

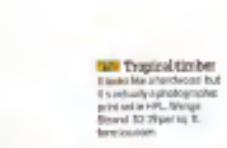
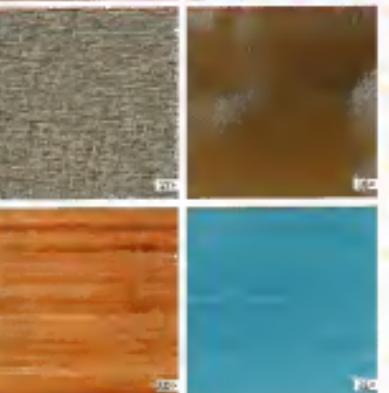
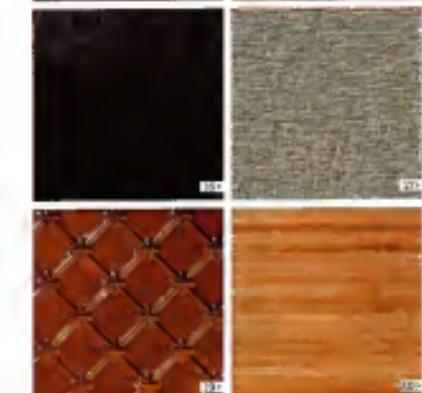
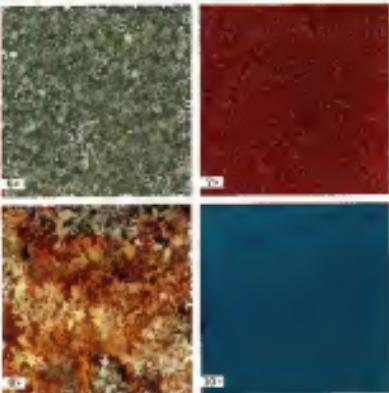
Aluminum looks like real copper. *Markylite* is a well-known brand. Starting at \$10.25 per sq ft. [advtechology.com](http://advtechology.com)

### Redapple

Scattered greenish-red shapes look like vertical applications. *Greenline* \$2.19 per sq ft. [fernco.com](http://fernco.com)

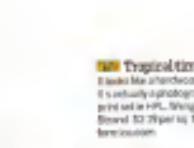
### Tiny bubbles

This ultra-thin pattern is intended to look pressure-baked. *Elégance* \$2.59 per sq ft. [fernco.com](http://fernco.com)



**Concrete**  
Marble sand gives this laminate the look and feel of concrete. *Concrete* \$14 starting at \$10 per sq ft. [advtechology.com](http://advtechology.com)

**Blue wave**  
A wavy pattern reminiscent of sugar cubes adds a fun touch to counters. *Agave* starting at \$7 per sq ft. [advtechology.com](http://advtechology.com)



## How to handle the oops!

Laminate is tough, but it's not totally immune to damage. TOH general contractor Tom Silva explains what to do about blemishes.

**Bumps:** If a hot pot creates a unsightly blister on your countertop, peel out the affected area and fill the recess with a heat-resistant cutting board, like the Surface Saver ([www.silicon.com](http://www.silicon.com)).



**Delamination:** Occasionally an edge or a top edge may loose from its base. Most times, all you need is a hair dryer or a heat gun to reactivate the adhesive ([www.silicon.com](http://www.silicon.com)). Use a rolling pin to press the laminate back into place. Wait it down for 24 hours.

**Chips:** Despite small chips with color-matched laminate repair paste, such as SeamFil ([www.americanpolymer.com](http://www.americanpolymer.com)). Larger chips are a bit more work: you have to replace the entire surface or, for countertops, you can put a new sheet of laminate over the old one. Fill the chip with Bondo, then sand it smooth. Rough up the old surface with 80-grit sandpaper, and adhere the new sheet with contact cement.

**Stains:** Attack stubborn stains with a thick paste of baking soda and water. Apply directly to the stain and let sit overnight, covered with plastic wrap to keep it moist, then wipe clean in the morning. Avoid abrasive cleaners, which leave minute scratches that pickup dirt. Use bleach only as a last resort, dabbing stains with a cotton ball. Rinse thoroughly; bleach residue can discolor laminate.

## New sinks for laminate

One of the hardest knocks against laminate countertops was that they required a drop-in sink—one that rested on top of the counter so that the particleboard base was protected from water. Unlike undermount sinks for stone or stainless-steel granite, for solid-surfacing, drop-ins have a lip that encompasses grout and makes rip-downs more difficult.

But now, thanks to special waterproof adhesives and new installation techniques, there are acrylic and stainless-steel sinks with lips that go under the laminate. These sinks, from Wilcock ([www.wilcock.com](http://www.wilcock.com)) and Karran, must be professionally installed; a basic acrylic version adds about \$100 to the cost of a counter.

### how to install and repair laminate

[www.silicon.com](http://www.silicon.com)  
How to fix 5 common problems  
and mistakes in laminate.

**Recycled content:** Laminate typically has some recycled content in the paper backing. Weyerhaeuser has as much as 20 percent. If you use plastic laminate from Steel Earth ([www.300percentrecycled.com](http://www.300percentrecycled.com)) but won't work on counters. For entrance and, as the alternative 100-percent recycled PVC-certified particleboard made of wood from well-managed forests.



## Edge upgrades

Counter edges don't have to be squared, or even covered with laminate. Here are different ways to add shape, durability, and class.



### 24° radius

For that retro class look, wrap the edge with a strip of metal stainless steel or aluminum (shelter.com, \$20-\$25/foot). Widths between 1/8 inches to 1/4 inches are available in straight runs or by 12 inches. Aluminum edges can be straight or curved but require cutting it into the edge of the counter. Standard 1/8-inch, \$4.20 per linear foot; and aluminum starting at \$5.10 per linear foot. [www.silicon.com](http://www.silicon.com)

### Round live edges

This durable low-maintenance material held on with an acrylic adhesive, can be cut and shaped like wood but doesn't require a protective finish. Pro: Round edges starting at \$26 per linear foot. DIY: \$10 per linear foot about \$1 per linear foot. [www.silicon.com](http://www.silicon.com)



### Wrapped

**Customized business:** ages or in need of a made-to-order look using your own materials. Order this wrapped through a local vendor or a fabricator and get a ready-to-install counter starting at \$2,40 per square foot. Find fabricators through [ultralife.com](http://www.ultralife.com).

### Bowed

A 45-degree bevel to the top of the counter is a traditional style of shaping, resulting in a smooth, square edge. Beveling costs about \$45 per linear foot. Fabrics by 8 per linear foot, starting at \$14 per linear foot; [ultralife.com](http://www.ultralife.com)



### Wavy

Hardwood adds a warm, rustic look. In lacquered or stain-grade finishes, wood can easily be cut and shaped. But it's not under the best of circumstances. Find a fabricator and get a ready-to-install counter starting at \$20 per linear foot. Fabrics by 8 per linear foot, starting at \$12.50 per linear foot. [ultralife.com](http://www.ultralife.com)

## Environmental scorecard



**Air quality:** High-density laminate sheets are Greenguard certified, meaning they pass strict tests for off-gassing. To further limit exposure to toxic chemical emissions, use low-VOC contact adhesive and a particleboard base that's made without urea-formaldehyde glue. Get board-level peace of mind with [ultralife.com](http://www.ultralife.com).

PHOTO: APPLIANCE SOURCE; SINK: KARRAN; COUNTER: WILCOCK; BOWLED: ULTRALIFE; WRAPPED: FABRICATORS THROUGH ULTRALIFE.COM



Find more info on your appliances than you ever thought possible.



This year, Lowe's became the first product retailer to win ENERGY STAR's highest honor for helping you save money and energy. By using ENERGY STAR®-qualified products, the typical household can save up to 30 percent on energy bills, or about \$700 a year.\* To start saving today, see an associate or visit [Lowes.com/RebateFinder](http://Lowes.com/RebateFinder).



# askthisoldhouse

inside

ROTTING TRIM

GREEN DRIVEWAY

SEALING GRANITE

MORE



28

tips, tricks, and  
answers to your home  
improvement  
questions

Q What makes a hatchet  
different from an ax?

—ROBESKEY PLUMBERS, CALIF.

A

A hatchet is a type of ax that people usually use to chop wood for heating and cooking. Axes have long handles and heavy heads with a sharp point at the top. Axes are used for cutting down trees. The hatchet is an ax without a long handle and the top head is very heavy for chopping. They both have heads made from a hard metal and wood would be good for splitting. —L.A. T.



PHOTOGRAPH BY  
ROB SCHMIDT

Our cast of veterans experts

TOM SILVIA  
General ContractorSTEVE BEHRMAN  
Master CarpenterRICHARD TRETHEWAY  
Plumbing/Architect ExpertROGER COOK  
Landscape ContractorKENDALL CONNOR  
Painter

**My contractor turned off the gas meter so that he can start a major renovation on my house. I always thought only the gas company should mess with the meter. Am I wrong?** —KEVIN RING, BETHLEHEM, NY



**Richard Tretheway replies:** Not exactly. Turning off gas at the meter is something we do as a matter of course at *This Old House* whenever we undertake a big remodeling project. Gas companies are happy to show customers how to shut off gas at the meter because doing so is an emergency, such as in a earthquake, can avert a disaster. That's why it's not a bad idea to keep an adjustable wrench near the meter, just in case.

But...real-life implementers don't want homeowners turning the gas back on. They want to be the ones to do it because it gives them a chance to check the entire system and ensure that there aren't any leaks and everything is working properly, including all the pilot lights.

You can close the shutoff valves at each appliance, but that won't prevent a leak of lines leading to the appliance from accidentally damaged during demolition work or subsequent rebuilding. Shutting off the gas at the meter may seem a little over-the-top, but when safety is involved, that's fine with me.

As a matter of safety, T.O.H. plumbing and heating expert Richard Tretheway shuts off the gas at the beginning of a big remodel. But it's the gas company's responsibility to turn it back on and make sure the system is leak-free.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GAS METER COMPANY

**ROTTING DOOR TRIM**  
For some reason, the horizontal trim pieces above my front door always rot after I replace it, even when I use mahogany. A similar thing is happening around the bottom of the door frame. What I have to remove this rotten frame?

—JULIA CAMPAGNA, GRISWELL, NJ

**Norm Abram replies:** The problem in both locations is that moisture is getting into the end grain of the wood and causing it to rot. All wood absorbs moisture easily through their end grain, and all wood, even oak and mahogany, will eventually fail if their end grain gets wet frequently.

First things, before you install a replacement piece, brush the end with a water-soluble wood preservative that's compatible with the type of paint you want to use. Let the preservative dry, then prime all the ends of the wood—edges, faces, and ends. And when you install the wood, but in ends in a high-quality polyurethane finish, then carefully caulk all the joints before painting the trim.

One thing that's contributing to the problem with the door frame is the stone threshold, which has probably been transferring moisture to the wood. Mitigate that stone with a masonry sealer to minimize that tendency. Any new wood trim should keep a 1/4-inch gap between the stone to prevent moisture from transferring between the two. Fill that gap with caulk before you paint.

You can also replace the rotted trim with a cellular PVC product, such as Aducar Click, which is moldable and comes in the same sizes as wood trim but can't rot or absorb moisture. Cellular PVC downspouts and eavestroughs lengthen slightly with temperature changes, but no chance



**A-1** *Abrasives*  
scrubbing block

**B-1** *Sawtooth*  
stripper

**C-1** *Coatop*  
buffer

**D-1** *Scrub*  
pad

FOR THE LOWDOWN  
SEE PAGE 106

**NOTCHED JOISTS**  
A home inspector says we need to fix floor joist notched by a plumber years ago. What's the best way to do it?

—CARLO BENTI, FLORENCE, S.C.

**Tom Silvia replies:** There are a couple of ways to tackle the repair, depending on how deep the notch is, where it is, and how much the joist has been weakened.

If the joist is sagging severely, or if you can see horizontal cracks going out from the notch, remove the pipe, jack up the joist slightly, then nail the strip to the bottom edge with lid nails.



On the left, the trim is peeling (bottom left). Blot ends of wood stain (center). Apply a strip of tape (right). I want to bring soaked oak by compressing end grain, a process that involves heating to avoid discoloration.

pick up the post until it's level, then glue and nail lid nails to both sides using construction adhesive and 6d common nails. The plywood should be as deep as the joist, and at least 4 feet long, and its face grain should run in the same direction as the joist. Spread the nail to 8 inches apart and stagger them across the surface of the plywood. Then drill a hole for the pipe and remove it.

If the joist isn't sagging significantly, you can reinforce it without removing the pipe. Cut two pieces of plywood as above, but notch them so that they fit around the pipe. Don't let the plywood and the pipe touch because they will squeak as they rub against each other. Glue and nail the plywood as before.

If the notch is in the location of the joist and the joist isn't sagging too much, another approach is to bridge it with a 12-gauge galvanized metal strap strip long enough to extend at least a foot beyond the notch on both sides. Jack up the joist slightly, then nail the strap to the bottom edge with lid nails.

## Q OLD BASEBOARD, NEW FLOORING

I plan to install engineered wood flooring in my house. I've already cut the ends of the floor panels with a undercut saw so that the new flooring will sit underneath. Now how do I remove the baseboards? I can't remove them because they're part of the subflooring.

—SUSANNAH FITZGERALD AND

**Morris Abrams replies:** Even if you didn't have the subflooring, taking off the baseboards, particularly in an old house, usually causes more problems. A better approach is to cut them in place using a carbide one, a power tool often used by flooring contractors. These tools are sold on-line starting at about \$150 or can be rented from a tool center or a flooring distributor. They can't cut into inside corners—that requires a chisel and some patience—but otherwise the work should go fairly quickly.

Here's another, potentially easier way to go. Saw the new flooring up to the baseboard, leaving the required expansion gap, then cover that gap with quarter-round or base-shoe molding fastened to the baseboard. For best appearance, route the molding on itself before it reaches the door casing.

## ERODING DIRT DRIVEWAY

I have a driveway that's mostly dirt with some gravel mixed in. I've had to fix it several times because of water washing over the drive when we get big storms. I'd like to pave it, but in this climate asphalt and concrete wouldn't last much heat. Does this a "green" driveway that allows the rain to soak through would be a good solution?

—SCOTT GLASSER, JOHNSTON, IOWA

**Roger Cook replies:** Well, the way I see it, you already have a green

## QUESTION OF THE MONTH

using a router  
blade, first cut  
the height to  
the molding; a  
baseboard cap



**Q Our 1930 house has beautiful original moldings, except in the dining room where they were removed by the previous owner. I can't find anything to match them. Any suggestions?** —ANNE HARRIS, LITCHFIELD, ILLINOIS

### Great Hall Antiques and owner, Hall Historical, replies:

When none of the offerings at the home center or the lumberyards measure up, then it's time to go to the custom route. A woodshop can make special "knock" and turn out

an exact duplicate of your existing moldings. The problem is, you have to pay up front, which can be an issue, especially if you're on a budget and may not be cost-effective for a small order like yours.

The way to avoid those charges is to make your own profiles using a table saw, band saw, and router. On the next page, you can see all the steps I follow in order to copy a short piece of baseboard cap. The process isn't difficult, as long as you're familiar with your tools and respect the power of these powerful tools.

**Cheat:** \$50 for a bending bit

**Tools:** Circular, band or which is setting to 90 degrees. Router. **Difficulty:** Difficult. Care must be taken when working with power tools.

## STEP-BY-STEP Match moldings

### 1. Trace the profile

Router off a piece of the molding you want to copy (I'll work with panel, off-cut pieces) to form a wood "tracing block" slightly longer than you need. Indent the bottom of the block to match the height of the molding you're copying. Trace the profile of the molding onto the end of this block. If the wood will be stained, choose block of the same species as the original.



### 2. Rough out the shape

Put the end of the block next to the block with the inside-side facing away. Adjust the blade height to just above the previous cut. Make three passes, set the fence so the cut will hit the mark. After making the cut, turn the wood and adjust the blade height for a different pass on the profile. Leave the fence slightly unsquare to help. Repeat until the profile is roughed out.



### 3. Rout the bead

For certain details, like this bead, it's faster and more accurate to shape the profile on a profile table than to use a table saw. The curved part is cutting the inside table surface and the bevel height. Turn feed the end of the block into the spinning arbor and make adjustments until the bead matches it exactly the right spot. Then rout the ends in molding.



### 4. Cut the sanding block

The roughed-out profile needs to be sanded to planer-size bevel and outer outlines. You can trace-and-sand simple moldings or make a custom sanding block. Trace the profile onto the end of a short piece of scrap at slig-  
htly less than 90 degrees. Use a band  
saw to cut along the profile line.



### 5. Sand

Check how well the rough-sanding and the block fit together, trim the block until they make up. Stack 30 grit sandpaper on the sander block (double-sided tape) and smooth out the rough molding. Replace the paper as needed. Finish sanding with 100 grit paper.

### 6. Check the match

Finally, put it the shelving your progress against the original piece. If it doesn't match, make sure your curves are accurate. By this point, if you've done all your work without going inside the pencil line, your new molding will blend seamlessly with the old.

PHOTO: ROBERT M. COOPER

driveway—you just want it to be less maintenance. Here are three options to consider:

**Pervious pavers:** This is what most people think of when discussing green driveways. Made of masonry or plastic, they are laid over a thick base of crushed stone and have gaps and holes that allow water to drain through and around them. In most cases, the paved holes are filled with soil so that grass can be planted in them, as shown at right. They look good and work well but are expensive to install.

**Paving stones:** By paving concrete or asphalt parking in two strips, 24 to 30 inches wide and about 16 feet center to center, you'll spend 30 to 40 percent less if you paved the whole driveway. Fill the area between the strips with crushed stone to encourage drainage and resist erosion. Strip work lies on a straight driveway.

**Swales:** The cheapest solution is to dig a trench along the high side of the driveway. Make it about 12 inches wide at the bottom, 18 inches at the top, and 6 to 12 inches deep, then line it with flat stone or pavers, concrete squares, which prevent the sides from eroding. A spout should lead the water in a low point where it can then slowly percolate back into the ground.



A driveway covered with permeable pavers. This green-friendly solution from Invisible Pavers, allows water to soak back into the soil instead of running off.

**Q SEALING GRANITE**

Does granite really have to be sealed? All the sealers I have at the tile store contained petroleum distillates and required lots of ventilation during application. Now I'm reluctant to put them in my kitchen counters tops because I'm not sure they'll be safe.

—RILEY FASCH, SAN FRANCISCO

**Reply:** Executive director of the National Tile Contractors' Association, "Sealing granite is usually a good idea. On kitchen countertops, we highly recommend it. Just be sure that it's rated as food-safe."

Tile contractor Mark Ferrante says the best sealers for granite and marble are the so-called penetrating sealers, or "impregnators," which sink into stone without affecting its look or shape the way that "topical" sealers might. The best impregnators are solvent-based—they contain

**Kevin O'Conor replies:** As a general rule, the right sealer will improve the stain resistance of most granite. According to Best



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these porous foam densities that scare you so concerned. Once the solvents evaporate, the resin left in the foam can't harm you, but if you'd rather not be exposed to VOCs while applying it, go with a water-based expansion, such as Aqua Max Fire-Resistant Foamer (comes in 1-gallon pails at \$20) or Stone Tech Seal (depicted here), which are free of volatile compounds.

The Old House general contractor Tom Silvia made the porous concrete mix his business about eight years ago. "It's easy to apply, just make sealing part of your maintenance routine," he says. "Besides, it's not that much granular aggregate; you'll still need to wipe up spills as soon as you can." In other words, a sealer can't block a stain—but given you an extra window of time to take care of any spills before they stain.

According to Fred Hussar, a reader of *Stone, Tile, and Concrete*, the best way to tell when it's time to resell a countertop is to pour a few drops of water on it and set a timer. If the water soaks into the stone within 10 minutes, you know it's time for another dose.

Hussar also says that sealers need a chance to cure—a couple of hours maximum—before you put anything back on the counter.

#### WHAT PRODUCT WHEN

#### Closed-cell spray foam vs. open-cell spray foam

We are considering the use of spray-foam insulation, but we're confused about which type to use. Can you identify the difference between open-cell foams and closed-cell foams, and when you would use one instead of the other?

—GEORGE MORRIS, TRACY, PA

**Tom Silvia replies:** All spray-foam insulation contains the same basic materials: a sticky polyisocyanate resin that reacts with ammonia in the air, and a blowing agent, a gas that forms bubbles and makes the resin expand. An open-cell insulation coat, the bubbles pop before the material hardens. As closed-cell insulation coats, the bubbles remain intact, filled with a low-conductivity gas. As a result, open-cell has the consistency of a light, fluffy angel-food cake, with an R-value of 3.3 to 4 per inch. Closed-cell foam is hard and dense, with an R-value of 3 to 7 per inch.



#### OPEN-CELL

##### PROS

- > Cost is lower to achieve the same R-value.
- > R-value remains steady over time.
- > Flexible, moves with wood framing.
- > Effectively seals corners.

##### CONS

- > Does not strengthen walls.
- > Requires mineral or reflective foil insulation.
- > May require a vapor retarder, depending on climate.

#### CLOSED-CELL

##### PROS

- > Strengthens framing.
- > Does not deteriorate, good for basements.
- > Blocks moisture well, may not need vapor retarder.

##### CONS

- > Does not strengthen walls.
- > Requires mineral or reflective foil insulation.
- > May require a vapor retarder, depending on climate.

Send your questions to [askthisoldhouse.com](http://askthisoldhouse.com)

By Tom  
askthisoldhouse.com/author/tomsilvia  
Ask This Old House  
This Old House magazine  
135 West 50th Street  
New York, NY 10020

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#### WHAT IS IT?

D-IY SPONGE ROLLER

The roller covers plastic fingers pushed around—and impaled—into a porous, open-cell leveling concrete or spray foam, but they do not interfere with the tiling or leveling process.

—SARAH COOPER



#### READER TOOL TEST

## 6-inch random-orbit sanders

When a woodworker needs to prep a door for staining or level out a jamb, a big 6-inch random-orbit sander is going to finish the job fast. The best ones combine adjustable power for fast removal or finish work, comfort for extended use, and decent dust extraction to keep the work clean. We had woodworking instructor Mario Rodriguez put these to the test. Here's what he discovered. —SAI VUONG

Note: All sanders tested with 120-, 150- and 220-grit sandpaper on a 1/2-inch-thick plywood panel and oak. Prints tested on laminate; see manufacturer's online distributor.



**MARIO RODRIGUEZ** is an instructor at the Philadelphia Furniture Workshop. He has nearly 30 years' experience as a professional woodworker.

#### FESTOOL ETS 150/3 EQ

Price: \$1295; [festoolusa.com](http://festoolusa.com)  
Test results: Performed very well with all three grits. 85 dB. Dust collection: excellent.

**My two cents:** This sander has comfortable ergonomic grip. I think it's best suited for finish work.

**Tool stats:** 4 pounds, variable speeds, 30,500 rpm, 8-foot belt-and-flock card.



#### METABO SXE 450 TURBOTEC

Price: \$247; [metabo.com](http://metabo.com)  
Test results: Left a finish sander to sand floor with a grit 80 bit. Dust collection: excellent.

**My two cents:** This is the quietest sander with recessed vibration. It has two sanding modes: one with a 1/4-inch orbital pattern for rough work, and another with 16-bit holes for fine sanding. A 10-bit sander, by the way, sanding speed even faster.

**Tool stats:** 3 pounds, variable speeds, 13,300 rpm, 6-foot cord.

#### see more sanders

[www.thisoldhouse.com/tools/sanders](http://www.thisoldhouse.com/tools/sanders) See how they're tested.



#### RIDGID R2611

Price: \$129; [ridgid.com](http://ridgid.com)  
Test results: Sanding popular wood with 80 grit, but 150 grit left over marks on the plywood. 130 dB. Dust collection: poor.

**My two cents:** It definitely built to last, but it did not vibrate excessively. It would be fine for everyday sanding, but fine finishing is not its strength.

**Tool stats:** 5 pounds, variable speeds, 12,000 rpm, 8-foot cord.

#### BOSCH 3727DDEV5

Price: \$199; [boschtools.com](http://boschtools.com)  
Test results: Fired very well on all three grits. 95 dB.

Dust collection: very good.

**My two cents:** It delivered very good scratch-free cuts with little vibration. Only complaint: The dust collector is difficult to remove.

**Tool stats:** 5.2 pounds, variable speeds, 12,000 rpm, 8-foot cord.



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**Owner:** Richard Thomas  
**Broker:** PBT-180-28115

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